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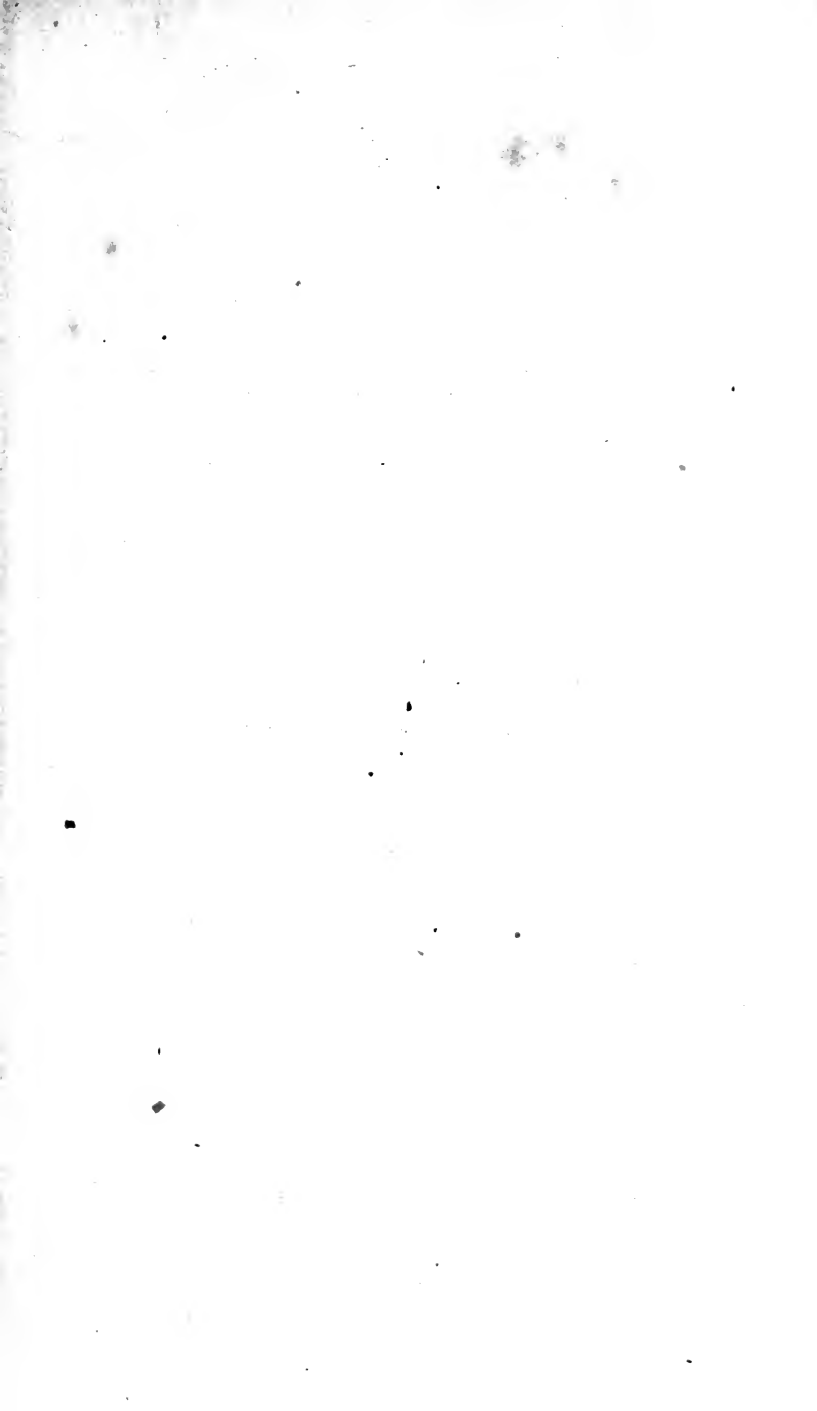
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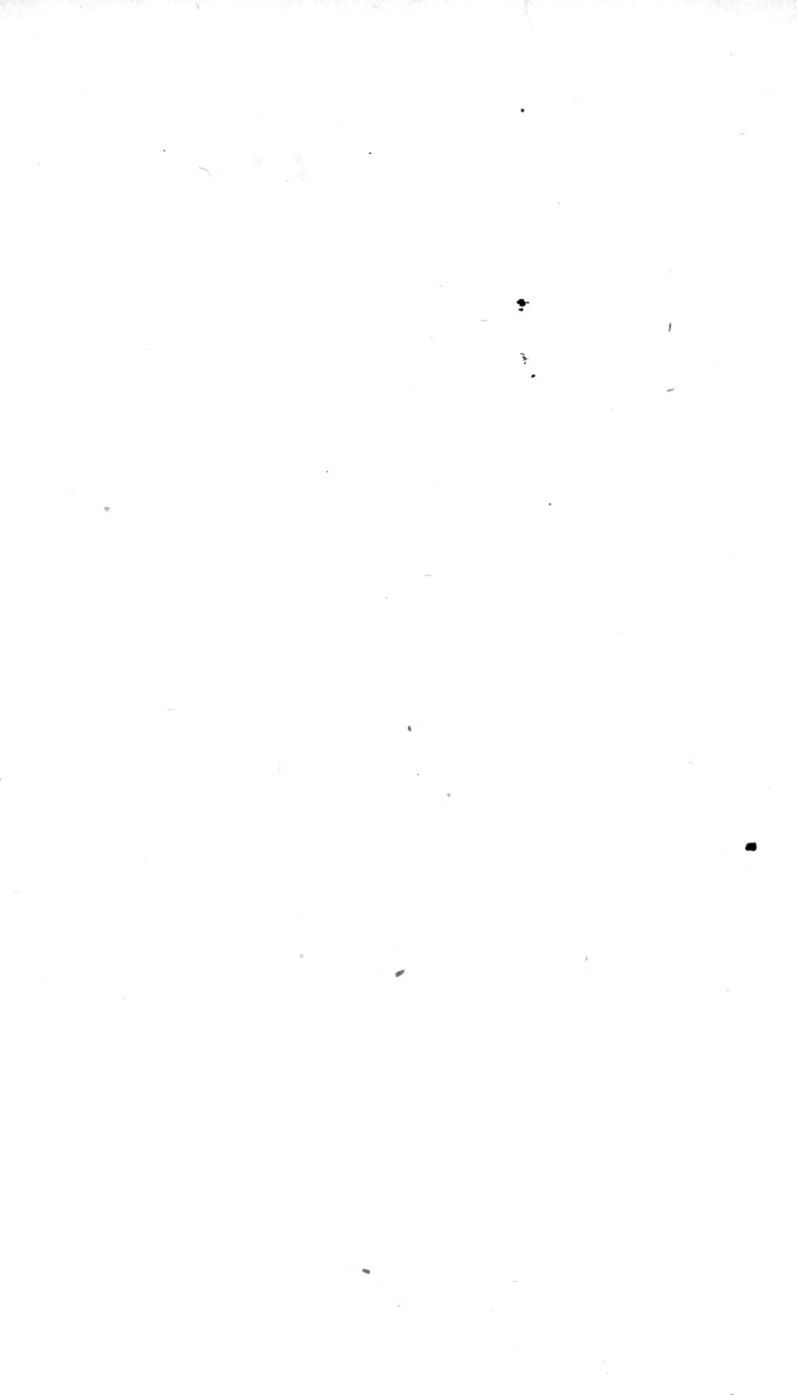
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272

272

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DISCOURSES,

BY

ABIEL ABBOT LIVERMORE,
||

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CONTENTS.

DISCOURSE I.

	PAGE
THE DIVINITY, SUFFICIENCY, AND PERPETUITY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION	1

DISCOURSE II.

THE MANNER OF REVELATION	34
------------------------------------	----

DISCOURSE III.

REVELATION AND REASON	53
---------------------------------	----

DISCOURSE IV.

THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS	75
--	----

DISCOURSE V.

THE LETTER AND THE SPIRIT	96
-------------------------------------	----

DISCOURSE VI.

THE CONQUEST OF EVIL	110
--------------------------------	-----

DISCOURSE VII.

THE PROMISE	130
-----------------------	-----

DISCOURSE VIII.

THE SOUL'S WANT OF GOD	150
----------------------------------	-----

DISCOURSE IX.

BE STILL AND KNOW GOD	164
---------------------------------	-----

DISCOURSE X.

UNION WITH GOD AND MAN	176
----------------------------------	-----

DISCOURSE XI.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS	192
------------------------------	-----

DISCOURSE XII.

THE THREEFOLD CHRIST	208
--------------------------------	-----

DISCOURSE XIII.

THE FULNESS OF CHRIST	230
---------------------------------	-----

DISCOURSE XIV.

JESUS THE RE-CREATOR	245
--------------------------------	-----

DISCOURSE XV.

GROUP OF THE CRUCIFIXION	259
------------------------------------	-----

DISCOURSE XVI.

SELF-CREATION	277
-------------------------	-----

DISCOURSE XVII.

UNION OF RELIGION AND LIFE	291
--------------------------------------	-----

DISCOURSE XVIII.

THE BLESSINGS OF A DAY	312
----------------------------------	-----

DISCOURSE XIX.

CHRISTIANITY A WANT OF CIVILIZATION	329
---	-----

DISCOURSE XX.

RELIGION A NECESSITY	340
--------------------------------	-----

DISCOURSE XXI.

RELIGION IN ITS FOURFOLD EXPRESSION	355
---	-----

DISCOURSE XXII.

CHRISTIANITY PROGRESSIVE	375
------------------------------------	-----

DISCOURSE XXIII.

WISDOM, LAW, AND FAITH	396
----------------------------------	-----

DISCOURSE XXIV.

I WOULD NOT LIVE ALWAY	412
----------------------------------	-----



DISCOURSE I.



THE DIVINITY, SUFFICIENCY, AND PERPETUITY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO HER, WHOSOEVER DRINKETH OF THIS WATER SHALL THIRST AGAIN: BUT WHOSOEVER DRINKETH OF THE WATER THAT I SHALL GIVE HIM SHALL NEVER THIRST; BUT THE WATER THAT I SHALL GIVE HIM SHALL BE IN HIM A WELL OF WATER SPRINGING UP INTO EVERLASTING LIFE.— John iv. 13, 14.

WHEN art, science, literature, or government is revolutionized, religion always feels the shock. For, entering as a component part into the structure of society, when other members suffer, it suffers with them; and when other members are honored, it rejoices with them.

Thus the conversion of Constantine, the Roman Emperor, in the fourth century, which led to the adoption of Christianity as the national religion instead of Polytheism, entirely changed the existing form and operation of the Gospel. What Rome gained, Christianity seemed to lose. Jesus became but a species of Jove of the Capitol. The sacred ordinances were drowned in heathenish rites. The

living were tied to the dead. The New Testament became the hand-book to a corrupt court and worldly policy. And the effect survives in the Roman Catholic Church to this day.

The next mighty movement, the Crusades, in the eleventh century, committed the religion of the Prince of Peace to a warlike and persecuting career. This turned the cross into the crescent for the time being, and made Christ, the suffering Son of God, the conquering Mahomet, with the Bible in one hand and the sword in the other. This discord, too, is still heard in the music of the Church. The fatal virus has circulated far in the veins of belligerent Christendom.

The Reformation of Martin Luther, in the sixteenth century, again broke the slumber of ages with a new day. The Gospel was then committed to a higher form than worldly policy or a warlike propagandism. It was embodied in intellectual dogmas, creeds, confessions of faith. Reason, individualism, dissent, asserted their claims. The Church began to return to the Bible, from whose living stream it had been cut off by the rubbish of tradition. The Scriptures were read, though it was through a glass, darkly. In Calvinism, the night-side of human nature found expression. Reason raised terrible questions, which reason could not answer. This dogmatic era has also woven its stiff fibre into the web, and we can trace it to this day.

But the motto of all human affairs is, "Overturn,

overturn"; and there came another general breaking up at the period of the American and French revolutions, in the eighteenth century. It was but a step, to pass from questioning prescription in the State to questioning it in the Church. The transition from no king to no bishop, was short and logical. Man even took his stand outside of the Bible itself, weighed the volume in his hand, said it was not a very great book after all, — was but little heavier than Aristotle's *Ethics*, or Cicero's *Colloquies*. The reason of Luther's time had ripened into the philosophy — falsely so called — of the French and English Deists. When thrones fell, the altar, close by, reeled at the shock.

In this instant and living present of the nineteenth century, however, we are lifted up and borne on the ground-swell of another stupendous revolution. Christianity feels the immense force, because it has grown into art, science, literature, and government, as a universal principle. It is not worldly power, as under Constantine, or war, as in the time of the Crusades, or human reason, as in Luther's day, or speculative philosophy, as in the period of the French Encyclopedists, but science, and science applied to art, that now makes a new point of departure for human society, and of course for Christianity. The other influences still endure, and are upon us, but this is the star of the ascendant.

There are wonders in heaven and in earth. Astronomy reveals them there, chemistry finds them

here. We recover from the surprising discoveries of the telescope, only to fall into new wonder at those of the microscope. The old interjections are not strong enough for these days of astonishment. But man is getting so nicely accommodated in his house on earth, and has such power over matter and its forces, can ride the sea, the land, the air, so victoriously, that he is becoming a little heady and self-willed, and forgetting the rock out of which he was hewn, and the pit whence he was digged. The sentiment of reverence is drained off in other directions. Revelation is taken down from the everlasting heights, where it was kindled and set by the hands of God, and is found, on examination, to be a candle lighted by man, and raised from the earth.

But as you have seen the moon, when the sky was overcast by ragged clouds, "walking in brightness," and sailing by them with an unshorn beauty and an unshaken serenity, so does Christianity pass through all revolutions, observations, and eclipses, only to beam with the same eternal light, and yield the same beautiful guidance to the benighted traveller.

Religious institutions, phraseology, and books are effected by these changes ; but the Bible stands, the Church survives, the Father finds worshippers, the Saviour disciples, heaven receives emigrant saints ; and though the very heavens and earth pass away, yet a new heaven and a new earth appear, wherein more and more dwelleth righteousness. The diffusion of the Gospel in extent, and the depth of its

power in life and character, were never greater than after nineteen centuries of action and reaction.

But again, as the great world has its periods, so does the little world of each man's heart. We live in the microcosm, what the world lives in the macrocosm. The infinite law is in a dew-drop, as much as in the Atlantic.

In childhood we receive religion implicitly, and say our prayers at our mother's knee without a serious doubt. Tender and holy indeed is that sense of home piety. Cowper writes immortal lines on it, that bring the tears now. John Randolph says it was all that kept him from the infidelity of Rousseau and Voltaire. Daniel Webster writes under the maternal portrait, "My excellent mother."

But in youth we begin to question. The world has a stern discipline. Faith for a time suffers eclipse. A love of independence, and a curiosity after the new and untried, make us dissenters from the good old ways of the past. The placid lake of the morning, smooth mirror of heaven, is ruffled by rising gales, and for a time the Divine image is lost.

But manhood is strong. It grasps the realities of things with a firm hold, and recovers the lost faith of childhood. The lake that was smooth in the morning grows smooth again towards night. John Quincy Adams, white with the snows of years, and bent by the tempests of state, repeats still, as he did of old at his mother's knee, before his nightly rest, —



“ Now I lay me down to sleep,
 I pray the Lord my soul to keep ;
 If I should die before I wake,
 I pray the Lord my soul to take.”

In the world, then, and in the individual experience, we are to expect to meet questioning, doubt, even stern denial. This always has been, and always will be. And we are not to be alarmed, panic-struck, indignant, at these states of mind, but calm, generous, appreciative, and charitable. Let doubt have a frank expression, and it will be sooner cured. But we are to use truth to convert error ; not anger, not sorrow, not custom. Truth is mighty, and it will prevail. Thought, free inquiry, discussion, action, are what we should covet, if we believe we have the truth. The most lamentable state of the Christian Church is stagnation, death. Truth becomes too obvious, — is taken for granted. Men sleep over it, make the sanctuary a dormitory, nod over the Bible. They assert and assert, and go away to live just as they did before. But a reformer, a radical, a denier, comes, and at his daring tread the mind is startled from its drowsiness. None can sleep now. Everybody is wide awake. Men think somewhat, and talk more. Some scold, some pray, and read their Bibles, and wish for more light ; and day does break. It is so of Millerism, Rationalism, Transcendentalism, Spiritualism. A storm on Lake Erie drives a steamboat ashore, and wrecks a few schooners ; but it purifies a hundred thousand square miles of prairie ex-

halation, and oxygenates the air for two millions of men to breathe. The intellectual and moral tempests may be uncomfortable, but they drive at a similar end. Let the winds blow.

Having glanced at the law of religious revolutions, and seen where we stand, I have thought the present would be a good opportunity to state to an awakened public attention what is our faith in Christianity, as Unitarians generally hold it, and the why and the wherefore. My remarks will be grouped under the three titles of the Divinity, the Sufficiency, and the Perpetuity of the Christian Religion.

1. By the Divinity of Christianity, I do not mean the Deity of the person, Jesus Christ, who brought it into the world, but the divine, superhuman character of the message and the messenger. Another being than God can reveal God. God is God, and Christ is Christ; but God is not Christ, and Christ is not God. The personality of God is as distinct from the personality of Christ, as that of James is from John. Such is "the doctrine of pronouns." When we enter the spiritual sphere, there is God, but there also is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, at the right hand of the Father. But you are familiar with these opinions. In holding, then, to the divine character, and special miraculous agency of Christ, but not to his Deity, we agree with Universalists, Hicksite Quakers, and the Christian Connection; and we differ from Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians, the New Jerusalem Church, and Catholics.

*The divinity of the Christian religion is in its substance and its form; in its substance the most intimate and tender disclosure of the will of God, profounder than any lessons of the outward creation, providence, conscience, or the soul's intuitions, — and in form, special, miraculous, sudden. Revelation is not contrary to creation, providence, but additional. It is not against reason, but above it, — a secret opened, a mystery made into a discovery. It is not *unnatural*, for all we know of nature and the soul would lead us to expect some clearer exposition of God's will, and man's duty and destiny, but *supernatural*. It is clearer, more authentic, more authoritative and conclusive, and it works, as we expect it would if it were divine, new spiritual and moral results upon mankind.

In one sense, all nature, all providence, is divine. God made them. God is in them, their life, strength, beauty, and joy. But revelation is more divine, a fuller unfolding of the Godhead, a nearer approach of the finite to the Infinite. It is intentional and articulate. It is the Word made flesh. It is saying to man what he did not feel and believe of the Mighty Maker of all, I love you, I care for you, and I will save you. This message is special; it opens to us the bosom of God, it shows us the heart of the Father, it brings us nigh to him, when before we felt that we were far off. In his natural condition, to man's apprehension the world, life, and soul are emptied of God. But in man's Christian condition, God

flows back, fills and overflows the soul, inundates all things with his presence and love, making the sun and moon shine brighter, and filling home, earth, heaven, with a cheerful radiance. This divine sense of life we owe to Christianity. The Greeks and Romans had it not,—not Plato, not Cicero. We have drawn it in with our earliest breath, and it has grown with our growth, and strengthened with our strength. God is in New Holland as much as he is in the United States, but he is not felt to be there by its degraded savages, as he is felt to be here by us. Here the Deity is re-enthroned over his works and over the soul. Here man, not one or two extra geniuses or philosophers, but masses, millions of men, look at the universe out of a different mind and heart, and through the windows of different eyes. This is due, not to the natural development of the race, but to a special revelation; due, not to the nineteenth century, or any number of centuries, but to Christ and his Gospel.

But the Christian religion has other and important offices, constituting it divine. By flooding the world anew with thoughts and feelings of God, it would change, convert the heart, and thus effect a salvation from sin. For man is haunted, dogged with a feeling of moral unworthiness. Call it fear, superstition, folly, or what not; there it is, sin, and a sense of sin. You can see it in his eye. It blushes over his face. He cannot rid himself of it. Do you say it is education? But that is only putting

the question further back. How did education get it? You say it is a nursery idea. But how did the nursery create in successive generations from the first this sentiment of moral ill-desert? That would be a greater miracle than raising Lazarus, or healing the blind man. This sense of sin is embodied in all law, all art and literature; and it is in every faith and form of religion, from the lowest stages of idolatry up to the last work on Christian morals and piety.

Now it is the sublime and crowning office of Jesus to be the Saviour of men from sin, and from sinning. And the parental love and mercy of God, and his own life and death, and its mighty instrument, the Cross, are the means he employs to accomplish this end. Out of Christianity how feeble are the sentiments of forgiveness, reconciliation to God, submission, patience, repentance, reformation? They glimmer here and there, in a few eminent and pure-minded heathen, like a glowworm in the dark. But the power of the Gospel is such that it has made these holy and heavenly feelings and resolves, by which man is delivered from moral evil and its tormenting remorse in his soul, burning and shining lights to multitudes of men. This faith speaks to the criminals, to the sot, to the leprous-spotted profligate, "Go, wash and be clean," and mighty revolutions follow it. The cannibals of the South Sea Islands are now found sitting, clothed and in their right mind, worshipping God, and loving one another.

Father Mathew speaks this word of redemption, and millions arise, and fling from them a polluting habit. Elizabeth Fry utters it in Newgate prison, and poor wretches, whose souls seemed dead and buried even before their bodies, come to life at the glad sound, and whisper, "Is there hope even for us?" Miss Dix reads it to the insane, talks of it in dungeon walls, and the very walls — how much more human hearts which are not stone! — seem to grow gentle and soft at the melodious words, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee"; "Daughter, be of good cheer." Mr. Pease talks of this truth in the dens of the Five Points in New York, and our Ministers at Large proclaim it in the wretched alleys and hovels of Boston and Liverpool; and the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the sick are healed, and the morally dead are raised. Magical is this spiritual power and divinity of the religion of Jesus in redeeming man from sin, and reconciling him to God.

Christianity is divine, for it spreads over the world a sense of the presence of God, and it drives sin from the heart, and bleaches it out of the character and life.

But we advance a step. Many concede all this, and yet say, we see no proofs of any thing more than a natural agency, reason developed, man progressing, the world growing up to this point through six thousand years. Then we adduce, besides this internal and moral evidence of the power and divinity of the Gospel, its special character as a sudden moral phe-

nomenon in history, springing out of inadequate causes if we call it natural, but easily explained if we admit the record; in a word, its miraculous character.

Now, properly understood, miracles, what we call such, seem possible, probable, and I will say even inevitable. Certainly no one would limit the power of God, and say he could not work them. For when we have looked at the whole scale of the universe, does it not seem likely that they would occur? For what is a miracle? It is a wonder, as its derivation signifies, — a wonder more than commonly wonderful. Is it any violation of the laws of God? Not of the highest and most enduring of his laws, — certainly not; for God does not contradict himself, — but only of our acquaintance with his laws here, our human experience. Let me illustrate this by the creation of man.

No one yet has been bold enough to say that he believed our race is eternal on the earth. No human bones are found mingling in the mighty cemetery of departed generations of sentient creatures on our hills; no skull or vertebræ of man by the side of mammoth and mastodon. At a certain point of time, then, man was created. To a watcher in the heavens, — to those sons of God who shouted for joy when the new earth wheeled into the march of worlds and constellations, if any were looking on, — that creation of the first pair was to all intents and purposes a miracle worked on earth. Something was

done that was never done before. Something took place that did not violate, indeed, the greater law of the whole universe, — for creating intelligent beings, we may suppose, is such a law, — but it was an exception to the ordinary course of things on this globe.

They, therefore, who object to the moral miracle of Christ, a new and higher type of spiritual being, have got to account for the physical miracle of the creation at first, unless they believe man to have been an eternal inhabitant of this globe. For the great miracle, and inclusive of all other miracles, is Christ himself, so pure and perfect a being, springing at once to light out of the darkness of Jewish life, with all its bigotry and corruption; so humble, born in a manger; having never learned letters, only thirty years old, and yet distancing all teachers before or since in wisdom, all lives in spotless excellence and benevolence, and leaving an influence behind, — a Gospel, a Church, a kingdom, which, despite the ignominy of his death, and the successive attempts of Jewish, Pagan, and Mahometan powers to crush it, has gone on conquering and to conquer, until it has wellnigh filled the world. That such a being, himself a miracle, should work miracles, seems natural. Hence his words were miraculous, his deeds miraculous, his effect on the world miraculous; thus being an exception to the ordinary range of human experience, but not a violation, we may suppose, of the laws of all time and all being. For the love

which originally introduced one new system by the creation of man, now opened another by the creation of the Saviour of man. As it required ages upon ages for the earth to become prepared for the habitation of man, so, after he was introduced, society for many thousands of years was undergoing a preparation for the advent of the new moral type of being in Jesus. It is in accordance with this view that Paul says: "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit."

One word as to the use which this miraculous interpretation has upon man. The miracles of the New Testament are not so much proofs of the special, divine origin of the religion of Jesus, as helps to awaken mankind to see and feel those proofs, and the truths which lie behind them. Here are souls sunk in stupor and lethargy, but the miracle-worker comes along, and cures the sick, or raises the dead. According to the record, — and it has every external and internal mark of veracity, — crowds did follow Him of Nazareth, when they saw the mighty works he did, and even the half-converted Nicodemus got so far as to say, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." The office of the miracle is, as its name implies, to appeal to wonder, to arrest attention, to startle the dull and indifferent, to flow visibly before them as a stream of divine power, to show them, as by a lightning-flash,

the latent God in what is around them, and reveal him to their wondering and adoring hearts.

What are miracles, then, at man's point of view, may be laws at the Divine point of view.

Because God loves man more than father and mother their child, these special interpositions seem entirely possible, probable, rational, and necessary. They are the direct look, the felt touch, the pressure of the hand of the Mighty Parent of all. As the mother, engaged about her household tasks, plays and talks with her child, but once in a while she fixes her loving eyes full upon the eyes of her beloved, presses him more fondly to her bosom, and speaks a kinder word, so miracles break the silence of nature with articulate speech, articulate love. They are emphatically the Word of God. They are what the creation has been groaning and travailing to utter from the first by all its mute signs and gifts, but which at last burst into angelic anthems, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men."

Let it be further remarked, that Jesus claimed to be a special divine messenger, different from all who had gone before him. He calls himself the light of the world, the bread of life, the Son of God, the sanctified and sent, the way, the truth, and the life, the Saviour. Voices from above claimed this superiority for him at his birth, his baptism, in his teaching, and in his miracles. He died a wonderful death, was buried, rose again, and ascended on high. He

left behind a miraculous effect. For some reason, he has had a more wide-spread and a deeper influence on the history of the world than any other being. Since he lived, the world has taken its date from him. His resurrection is the certificate to all men that they also shall rise, and be immortal. What cause is sufficient to account for these phenomena of Christianity, and for its increasing vitality in the most advanced and cultivated nations, except we admit the divine, special, and miraculous character of its Founder?

We fall necessarily upon one of three suppositions. He was true, or he was himself deceived, or he deceived others. One of these three we must adopt, in whole or in part.

If we believe he was what he claimed to be, all is reasonable and probable. We then have a great cause, sufficient for the great effect to be accounted for and explained. This is philosophical, as well as evangelical.

But if we reject the idea of his perfect truth, and suppose that he presumed in aught upon our credulity and ignorance, then we find it wholly incredible that so much goodness, such transparent truth, such crystalline purity, so much love to God and man, should belong to the same character with so much craft and conceit. The immediate neighborhood and contact of two such characters, so utterly unlike and opposite, would be harder to believe than all the miracles, twice told, of the New Testament.

But if Jesus was neither true nor a deceiver, then we fall upon the sole remaining supposition, that he was an enthusiast, a fanatic. But what a miracle is here? To believe that such a life, such labors and instructions, such a death, such lasting effects on mankind, such faith and persuasion of his truth in many of the ripest and richest spirits that ever inhabited mortal clay, could grow out of one heated brain, without entire reason, truth, and reality to back the claim, is to reverse all the laws of probability, and call this a chance world, where effects take place without causes, and error and folly have all the power of truth. A corrupt tree does not thus bear good fruit. Mahomet succeeds for a time, because he used the sword. The Mormon chief succeeds a little, because he appeals to worldly comfort and sensual pleasure. The Christian empire had no sword, no sceptre, but a cross, tolerated none of the passions and appetites in self-indulgence, and was aided by no worldly power, but resisted by all; yet it is what we see it to-day in all the earth. If this counsel or this work had been of men, it would come to naught. Every reason to account for the spread, success, hopes, and prospects of Christianity centres finally in its character as a special, divine revelation from God to man by Jesus Christ. And if the Author and Finisher of our faith were seriously in error in a single point, bearing upon moral and spiritual subjects, respecting which he particularly came to make the revelation, would it not shake the entire

fabric of the Gospel, and bring a dark cloud of doubt over the whole?

2. The Sufficiency of the Christian Religion is but a corollary from its Divinity; for, if divine, it must be adequate to its purpose. So extensive and costly an apparatus cannot have been provided only to prove abortive. Fire, and light, and sun, and moon do not fail; why should truth, and love, and right? Divine in its origin, in the love and mercy of God, divine in the spirit, mission, character, works, and resurrection of its Founder, divine in its works and ways among men, it follows as an inevitable result that it is all-sufficient.

Some have objected, that they could not receive the Gospel as a sufficient guaranty to their salvation, unless its Author and Finisher were God himself. But it is virtually God himself. For the rule holds equally good in theology as in law, that what one does by another he does himself. If Jesus is commissioned by God, it is the same as if the Infinite One appeared in person. Do we rashly say we cannot trust in any being short of God for our safety in such an infinite matter as eternal life? We do trust in God when we trust in Christ. When the Chinese merchant at Canton has transactions with the United States, he must negotiate with our commissioner there. For the commissioner is the United States, carried abroad, all that can be carried, to China. So Jesus is God revealed into this world, so much of the Infinite First Fair and First Good as can dawn on these dim eyes of dust.

But it is further objected to the sufficiency of the Christian Revelation, that it does not show the full glory of God. The Hebrew Revelation did not, we concede, because men were not able to bear the full blaze of light at once. Moses yielded a point here and there in his legislation, we are told, on account of the hardness of men's hearts. Even Jesus taught his disciples with adaptation, — gave them the truth as they were able to bear it. All believe in the progress of the material creation; why is it any more irrational to believe that there are progress, degrees in Revelation, if both are from God? Nature culminates in man; why should not Revelation culminate in Christ?

In both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, human words, figures, relations, and affections are used, and must be used, to set forth the infinite perfection of God. And no man, be he saint or philosopher, can use any other, though it be six thousand years after the creation, and two thousand after Jesus. For the moment you say father, mother, or employ the terms justice, love, mercy, you begin to limit the Illimitable, and to take terms from home, the court, the congress, and carry them up and attach them to the Absolute and Inconceivable and Inexpressible God. If you object to the imperfect and limiting terms of the prophet, he can equally object to yours. For you cannot jump the abyss any more than he, and pluck the spoils of absolute Infinity and Eternity. In truth, it may be doubted whether the most

eminent philosophers of the nineteenth century can surpass, or even equal, the sublime descriptions of God in David and Isaiah, to say nothing of Paul and John.

The intellect is indeed an inferior faculty, in the knowing of God, to the heart. For he is not known, but felt. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." "The world by wisdom knew not God." Wisdom became even an obstruction instead of a help. "Spiritual things are spiritually discerned." "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." Jesus said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." The grand generalization, God is love, was not made by the eagle intellect of Paul, but by the tender-hearted John. An eagle was in fact John's emblem in the early Church symbolism, as if to indicate that he soared by that very love into the heaven of heavens, into the heart of the Unknown and Eternal, and brought back the glad message, God is Love. The only idea of the Infinite Perfection is a sentiment. It cannot be grasped and weighed by the thought, but it can be felt by the heart. Words break down under the burden. Though they are piled up in great masses, and intensified and illuminated with rhetorical fire, they can only suggest that Uncreated Glory. One rapt emotion of a mother's heart, bending over her babe, one kindling spark of love in John, reclining in the bosom of his Master,

is a deeper glance into the fathomless mystery of the Godhead, than all that divines and philosophers could achieve by the mere intellectual study of a lifetime. Jesus reveals the infinite perfection of the Deity, not by displays of power or wisdom alone, though in these there was no defect, but in love, in doing good, in healing, blessing, forgiving his enemies, dying on the cross. No wonder the world has called this being God; for there shone the brightness of the Everlasting Glory.

It has been objected to Jesus having the true idea of the infinite perfection of God, that he admitted the existence of three things conflicting with that perfection,—a Devil, absolute evil, and an eternal hell. I do not believe he did. I am one of those who are said to “explain the Devil out of the Bible,” and I prefer it to explaining the Bible off the basis of its divine and miraculous character. For if I found any thing in the teachings of Jesus which I could not accept, I should be more inclined to think that I erred in the interpretation of his words, than that he erred in understanding God and his universe.

But Jesus admits there is evil; so do we; so do all men;—evil, that black mote swimming in the golden sunlight of all this glorious universe. We live nineteen centuries after Christ, yet evil, that sad, fearful, ominous, inscrutable thing, still exists. I feel it, see it; so do you; so do all. By no ingenuity can we make it a synonyme for good; evil it will still remain, in gloomy, awful form, as if a bright angel

had fallen from the sky, and lay prostrate and broken on the earth. Some still put a *d* before it, and call evil devil, as they did in olden time of vivid figures of speech, and sometimes almost violent personifications. So Wisdom was a person in Proverbs, and Charity, Sin, Death, the Law, in Paul. If we interpret language, we must do it according to the rules of language. The art of criticism may be despised, but it is as essential in its place as the kindred art of computation in numbers, for we cannot make the mental, any more than the numerical figures, yield the right result, without the right rules.

Evil, both natural and moral, seems to arise from the very necessity of a finite and created being. Jesus barely stated the fact. He did not explain it, and he did not speculate about it. Perhaps its explanation is not a subject of human knowledge. There may be some thoughts the human mind cannot think in the present state. We cannot tell whence evil is, how it is, or what it is. But it is, — stern, inexorable fact. Evil, suffering, sin, dungeons in Austria, gibbets in Rome, slavery in the South, bloody stripes on the flesh, darker spots on the soul! O the untold suffering, agony, despair, suicide, of mortals! If it is their fault, why is it their fault? is the significant inquiry. Why should such a fatal margin have been granted to their liberty? If it still exists, this Sphinx-riddle of the universe, at the end of six thousand years, why may it not at the end of sixty thousand or of sixty million years? If it ex-

ists now at the end of an eternity past, so to speak, who shall presume to say but that it may exist somewhere, in some world, in some being, at the end, so to say, of an eternity future? Once having conceded evil, who shall prescribe limits, and say, "Thus far, and no farther?" For if it is consistent with the perfections of a Being, infinitely powerful, and able to prevent it, infinitely wise, and knowing how to prevent it, and infinitely good, and disposed to prevent it, to allow evil in this world for a limited time, in order to accomplish wise and benevolent purposes, as we believe with the strength of adamant, who shall undertake to say it may not also be consistent in other worlds and other states of being? The truth is, we know nothing about it, and cannot even speculate far. Jesus came to forewarn us, and forearm us for the eternal life, not to relieve our curiosity about a multitude of questions and problems, for which we are not yet probably far enough advanced. Little children must begin with their *a b c*, not La Place's *Mécanique Céleste*, or Kant's *Pure Reason*. The teacher of heaven knows the law of adaptation as well as the teacher of the village school. Jesus said the practical word, and let the speculative word go. He said, offences must needs come, — such is the constitution of things. He did not attempt to explain what we could not understand, either original or total, natural or acquired depravity, but he pealed into the startled ear of conscience the eternal law, and love as well as law, Woe to that man by

whom the offence cometh! When Peter would suggest a temptation, he exclaimed, Get thee behind me, Satan; showing who and what he knew Satan to be, — evil, sin. But he had no time to correct a host of superstitions, any more than of astronomical mistakes. He taught the mighty and luminous truths, that would at last extirpate all material errors.

But though he did not solve intellectually the question of evil, either here or hereafter, — as who but the Infinite Mind can? — he did solve it spiritually. He gave the clew to the heart out of this labyrinth. To the believing, praying, loving, and working soul this dark shade grows paler and paler, lighter and lighter, until it is swallowed up in the blaze of glory. Evil is thus found to be, as has been said, good in the making. How bravely did the Conqueror of Sin and Death, yet how tenderly, pass onward and upward to the everlasting day, through the hall of Pilate, up to the cross of Calvary, through the tomb, to Olivet, until a cloud received him out of their sight! Can Philosophy give us any explanation of evil, equal to this faith and deliverance of the Son of God? The great heart of humanity for twenty centuries answers, No.

Again, we place man no more in the dark on one side, and God in the light on the other, on the theory of revelation, than others do on the theory of nature and natural development. For on the natural and philosophical theory, man began low, has crept up

very slowly, and has not risen very high at last, being on the dark side, and being visited by a little light glimmering through the semi-opaque wall. This deprivation of light, and its slow progressive shining through, is as much to be objected to, because it would seem to conflict with the perfect benevolence of the Deity, as to assume the theory that, at certain definite periods, distinct rays of Revelation were allowed to perforate the wall of partition, and fall on the pathway of man. Butler long ago settled this class of difficulties by his Analogy, and the argument cannot be shaken. If there are difficulties under the system of Revelation, they are not removed, but aggravated, by returning to philosophy and nature. He who leaves the sun, to get heat and light from his own lamp, will find not less, but more, darkness than before.

If we consider, then, either the scale, or the filling up of the scale, the quantity or the quality of this wisdom from above, we find it sufficient and fitting. That the man-made creeds of the churches, or the rituals of the sects, into which Christendom is splintered up, are able to meet the progressive spirit of society, I doubt; but the fountain is purer than the streams, and he who drinks there will never thirst more.

The great names of history on the side of Revelation, who found it sufficient in the toils of state, the researches of science, the flights of poetry and fiction, and the depths of philosophy, are the names of transcendent power, whose very mention sends a thrill



through one as at the presence of superior intelligences. Their testimony is no more, to be sure, than that of Cowper's Poor Cottager, or the Shepherd of Salisbury Plain; for the soul is soul, and man is man, all over the world; but the monumental names of Leibnitz, Newton, Milton, Bacon, Burke, Cuvier, Washington, bear testimony to faith in the Son of God, as a sufficient Saviour.

For the sublime process is ever going on from age to age. The Bible is an unexhausted book. The spiritual aid from heaven is ever flowing. Jesus is personally gone, but spiritually he has diffused himself everywhere. His words remain, the seeds of truth. The Holy Spirit rains sweet and purifying showers on men's souls. The channels are open, and the ways direct. The battery is ever full charged, the jar is ready, the conductors are in their places. The electric element is in constant transmission. In the Bible God speaks to man, and in prayer man speaks to God. The wants of earth go up to plead before God, and the fulness of the Divine All in 'All is ever coming down to satisfy these wants. The ladder is erected, and angels are seen ascending and descending.

3. From either proposition, then, of the Divinity or of the Sufficiency of the Religion of Jesus, we might infer its Perpetuity. For God is economical. The nature of Revelation is progressive, as it respects its reception and application by man, but it is completed in its perfect life, its all-comprehending love

and mercy, and its sufficient truth. Can the human eye bear a brighter light than the Sun of Righteousness? Can truth be truer, pity tenderer, or love deeper and warmer? The Hebrew dispensation looks forward to the fulfilment of the Christian, and the Christian looks back to its own germs and beginnings in the Hebrew. But the Christian predicts only its own expansion, not any second Messiah. Illustrious sons, whom it has nourished, have developed and applied it, — Augustine, Luther, Howard, Calvin, Wesley, Channing; but what single new truth, new spiritual principle, new sentiment, now vivifies society, or looms up in the future, but what is coiled up as a spring, or lies as an element, in the New Testament itself, ready for use?

The Millerites, who look for a second advent of the former Christ, and his reign on earth, and the Rationalists, who anticipate more perfect revelations, belong to the same class in their dissatisfaction with Christianity as it is. But what office could the new messenger fill, that is not already occupied by our Lord? Is there any unoccupied field of spiritual truth, social sentiment, or philanthropic reform? Jesus seems to have laid down laws that cover all cases, given a life that has no flaw, and charged a magazine of spiritual forces sufficient to convert the world. Paul could add nothing, John could add nothing. Has any one since, can any one, add anything, after the Son of God has spoken? Men are inveigled into the notion, that, because there are new

machines and télégraphs, there must be a new Gospel. But what can be added to the Perfect? I can conceive of no brighter representative of the Godhead than Jesus. He shines with all the glory we can bear. We may reverently say, he lived on earth as God would live if God were man, in love, patience, fortitude, goodness, holy joy, and hope.

Jesus promised, indeed, that his disciples should do greater works than his. In one sense they have, and will. In their lifetime they may exceed in quantity what he said and did in his lifetime. Paul, for example, travelled farther, wrote books, as Jesus did not, left behind more words, and probably while living made more individual converts. But what a distance between the Master and his disciple! The diamond is carbon, and coal is carbon, but what a remove is the jewel from the stone! When the sun is up, the stars are not seen. Jesus was not exclusive, exacting in spirit, monopolized no virtue, carried none to excess, has associated his name not with one, but all graces; bade his disciples aim not at him, but at the Infinite Perfection, — Be ye perfect, as God is perfect; yet who in all the millions of the spirits of the earth has ever approached the wisdom, the love, the holiness, the benevolence, the self-sacrifice, of the Lord? His lessons are as living to-day as when spoken on the hills of Galilee and Judea. There is no smell of age on them. None has grown obsolete; none reads hard; none jars, when science is spoken of, when music is played, when senates

deliberate, when the world holds its conventions, or builds its crystal palaces, or when art ransacks heaven and earth to seek new elements, and apply them to its machines, and change the habits and occupations of mankind. This sweet and holy wisdom glides in like light, wherever we will let it go, and it gilds and beautifies all it touches. The unwholesome birds of night fly into the dark places at its shining. All our wrong desires shrink away from the clear and loving eye of the Son of God.

What is natural we cannot now precisely say. For Christianity has slidden into nature, has entered the stars, and trees, and streams, and invested them with its spirit. The human consciousness is now a Christian consciousness. All in the range of civilized nations have had their being more or less soaked and saturated with the sentiments of Jesus. They drank them in early, and they drink them still. We owe more to Christianity than we are aware of, for this thing has not been done in a corner, nor hidden under a bushel. We cannot denude our souls, and say, this is nature, and this is Christ. For he is now an element with the rest, as the air, or the water. His star shines with all the heavenly host. We are born into him, as we are born into day and night. Christianity was supernatural in its origin, like the physical creation, and man himself; but like them, it is natural in its continuance and operation. Whither do even reformers, radicals, and deniers resort for their golden rules, their higher laws, their rebukes of

wickedness and hypocrisy, their hopes of brotherhood, and their beatitudes, but to the New Testament? Has it ever been tried and found wanting in the utmost spiritual emergency?

Christianity has two great works always on hand; to save man, and to save mankind; to re-create the bruised and stained soul after a divine type, and to organize society on a new basis. It would take this cold and heavy lump of humanity, and breathe into it a living spirit. It would take this battle-field of the earth, and wash out its bloody spots with the rains of mercy and love. It would take this black and threatening cloud of slavery, and draw out the thunder-bolts from its bosom, and write a rainbow of promise over its portentous folds. It would advance association, the first faint crystallization of the Christian kingdom, into the brotherhood of nations. We take a low view of the progress of mankind, when we dwell chiefly on tools and telegraphs. The great human growth is in thought, literature, morals, codes, philosophies. The conquest of new ideas from his spiritual sphere is the sign of the moral coming of the Head and Leader of the human race in his more complete reign on earth. Missions, Ministries at Large, Hospitals, Schools, Libraries, Lectures, Freedom, Temperance, Purity, Peace, are the heralds of his coronation.

When Jesus, after some of his disciples had left him, said to those who remained, "Will ye also go

away?" he who was ever forward, and whose first impressions were always better than his sober second-thought, ejaculated the glorious confession for himself and all the world, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

Far, far be it from me to condemn any man who differs from me in opinion or faith. To his own Master he standeth or falleth. Twenty violations of faith are not so bad as one breach of charity. Charity is not only the kindest rule for the heart, but the truest rule for the intellect. Some who deny the supernatural character of Christ are better men morally than some who believe in it. There is such a thing as holding error, rank error, in the spirit of truth, and of holding truth in unrighteousness. But when I look at the Author of the Christian religion, at his deeds and words, his life, death, resurrection, and ascension, when I see how broad and unmistakable are the proofs of his divine mission, when I witness the energy which his religion put into the breasts of a handful of Galilean fishermen, and how it has ever gained and gained against power, custom, fashion, worship, interest, sense, until it has won all contemporaneous civilized empires, I can assign no adequate philosophical cause for so essential and enduring a change, but the authority of a divine messenger. I know good men have lived and died without this regenerating power. But when I consider how easily we are tempted, and how far we go astray, how short is life, and how

certain is its end, I feel the want of this faith in God, in Christ, and in immortality, as the one thing needful, the light of life, the pearl of great price. I find the New Testament emphasizing, with every variety of phrase, the want of this faith, and its inexpressible value. And when I bow my mind, my heart, my will, my life, my whole being, before this commanding authority of Jesus, I feel not humiliated, but elevated, glorified by the act.

In conclusion, to use the words of Dr. Dewey, "I know it is often said, What great harm is there about this system of Naturalism? There are many beautiful things in it; what great harm is there in rejecting the miracles? The substance of Gospel truth and love is left. What need is there of looking so very seriously upon a man, though he does assail your faith in a divine interposition? I judge no man's heart; but I will tell you the state of my own. Very seriously I must look at this question, at any rate. For I feel deep in my heart and whole being the need of such a faith. I must confess that the teaching of Nature is too general to satisfy the wants of my mind; and that the revealings of my mind, again, are too doubtful and defective for the needed reliance. I am ignorant, I am weak, I am sinful, I am struggling with many difficulties; the conflict is hard, — it seems too hard for me at times; and nature around me moves on, meanwhile, in calm uniformity, as if it did not mind me, and as if its Author did not regard the dread warfare

that is going on within me. The universe lies around me, like a bright sea of boundless fluctuations,—studded with starry isles indeed, but swept by clouds of obscurity; and whither it is tending, and where it is bearing me, I know not. I feel at times as if I were wrapt with an infinite envelopment of mystery; and I ask, with almost heart-breaking desire, for some voice to come forth from the great realm of silence, and speak to me. I say, ‘O that the great Being who made the universe would for once touch, as no hand but his can touch, the springs of this all-encompassing order, and say to me in the sublime pause,—in the cleft of these dread mountain-heights of the universe,—say to me, I love thee; I will care for thee; I will save thee; I will bear thee beyond the world-barrier, the rent veil of death, and the sealed tomb, away, away, to blessed regions on high, there to live for ever!’

“It has COME! To my faith, that very word has come, in the mission of Christ. I will not mock conviction with arguments to prove the value of such an interposition. I will only say, ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away!’”

DISCOURSE II.

THE MANNER OF REVELATION.

GOD, WHO AT SUNDRY TIMES AND IN DIVERS MANNERS SPAKE
IN TIME PAST UNTO THE FATHERS BY THE PROPHETS, HATH IN
THESE LAST DAYS SPOKEN UNTO US BY HIS SON.—Heb. i. 1, 2.

IN discussing the Manner of Revelation, the following points claim our notice: the Time, Agents and Examples, Languages and Books, Miracles and History, and Institutions and Ordinances, by which the gift of a pure and regenerating faith has been imparted to mankind.

1. *Time.* — The text refers to this feature of Revelation. Communications were made to the fathers by the prophets, and in later times to us by the Son of God. Centuries and ages were required to complete the scheme. Man was to be taken at a low and infantile point, and raised up to the fulness of the stature of a perfect manhood; from “a living soul” to “a quickening spirit.” The divine compasses were to trace one arc after another of the vast circle, and generations were to come and go, before it was finished. By no one sudden blow could the

benevolent design of giving man the true knowledge of God, and his own duty and destiny, be executed. The laws of progress, gradation, and periodicity must be observed in regard to our higher nature. Man was not to stride by one enormous step from the depth of idolatry to the height of a filial and intelligent worship, but he must go up step by step, and round by round, on the ladder on which angels ascend and descend. One age was to witness one attainment, and another, another. It was much to establish the unity of the Deity; it was more to develop the idea of the Father. We see, therefore, in this characteristic of Revelation, an analogy with other portions of the Divine workings: the growth of the plant, "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear"; the age-long preparation of the earth for the abode of man, the progress of the arts and sciences, and the slow advancement of government and civilization from their rudimental to their glorified condition. The necessary element of time is allotted to the germination, expansion, and ripening of the religious ideas. Revelation in this view is an education, begun with one man, prosecuted with his descendants, from one nation to all nations, from a narrow province of Asia over the whole globe.

There is a grandeur and beauty in this succession of periods in Revelation, wholly inconsistent with the notion of human invention and fraud. If one man had begun such a system, would other men

have been found to carry it out through long periods of centuries and thousands of years? The deception is on too gigantic a scale for puny man either to conceive or execute. He may falsify a date, an act, a single reign, and corrupt a nation by his misgovernment or his writings, but he cannot take the sceptre of the ages in his hand, and plan a fraud, which shall be commenced under Moses, prosecuted by kings and prophets, and consummated by Christ and his Apostles, and looking through a range of interminable ages for its entire fulfilment. For link is joined to link in one dependent and connected chain, and he must have been an arch-magician, scarcely less than omniscient, who could plan the whole, if it were based on error and fraud.

Any seeming exception to these views arising from the long continuance and wide spread of Buddhism, Mahometanism, and other great systems of error or fanaticism, is obviated, when we recall to mind, that they arose at once in a single man, or generation, and have none of that prospective character belonging to Judaism, nor of that retrospective character belonging to Christianity. The length and breadth of Revelation, therefore, are securities of its truth, for the unfolding of each successive stage reveals the finger of Him who sees the end from the beginning, and with whom a thousand years are as one day.

A very practical inference from this view of the progress of Revelation is trust in its essential results. If it have been ages in a course of prepara-

tion and development, it is natural and to be expected that it should also be ages in its application and fruits in the lives, communities, and nations of men. A tree that has been growing so long will long bear fruit. Instead of being near the end of the world, we are near the beginning. This is the morning, not the evening, twilight of the great day of the Lord. But many who are most profoundly convinced of the truth of Revelation falter in their confidence of its results. They believe the Creator has constructed a wonderful moral machinery, so to speak, but they doubt its power and success. They despair of the improvement of mankind, scorn the zeal of reformers, and stand upon it as an incontrovertible position, that if the world always has been rude and barbarous, it always must be; there is nothing new under the sun; the universe can only go on repeating itself. The introduction of the time element into our survey of Revelation corrects this narrow scepticism. As it lifts our eyes to the venerable past, it turns them also to the splendid future. It assures us that Hope is greater than Memory, and that Prophecy surpasses History. All the triumphs which Christianity has thus far achieved are but beginnings. It has not yet entered the heart of the world and carried captive every thought to Christ. But it will go on for ages, to which the lives of individuals are but as drops to the bucket, winning new victories over evil and sin, transforming institutions, moulding and coloring more per-

fectly the heart of humanity after a Divine type and hue, and domesticating the kingdom of God among the sons of men.

II. *Agents and Examples.*—Again, the manner of Revelation is not abstract, but concrete. The ordinary as well as supernatural agencies are employed. If angels are sent, so are men; if the special messenger raised up, sanctified, and commissioned be the Son of God by excellence, yet a long line of the good and the great bear up the ark of God; and patriarch, king, and priest, and prophet, and apostle, are seen at different intervals along the majestic procession. In selecting men to act so distinguished a part in the designs of God towards his children, we perceive a part of the same system which we witness in business, art, science, government, and literature. For if “History be philosophy teaching by example,” then is Revelation religion teaching by example. In this feature of the mode of communication we see the wise adaptation of means to ends, the use of causes to produce effects, such as we should anticipate from so great a Designer. To every abstruse principle, to every divine sentiment, is assigned some magnified and brilliant example, exhibiting it in a more impressive and really true light, that the world might look on and admire, and catch the contagion of truth and goodness. Hence Abraham stands for faith, Job for patience, Joseph for purity, David for piety, Solomon for wisdom, Daniel for faithfulness, Paul for zeal, and

John for love. In the changing moods of the human mind, and the different experiences of life, how much good is often done by the presentation of some clear and unquestionable example of a failing virtue restored, or an imperfect excellence brightened! We see and admire. We touch but the hem of the garment of some one of this "sacramental host of God," and their virtue passes into us, and we become whole and strong.

Are we told that errors and imperfections attend the development of divine truth by so many different characters, and that Moses loses his faith, David his integrity, and that Peter dissimulates? But inspiration of ideas does not imply perfection of conduct any more than it does universality of knowledge, and though the treasure of God be in an earthen vessel, the vessel still remains earthen, coarse, liable to fracture and flaw. Then it is plain that all that is lost by the sins and faults of prophets and apostles is compensated by the boundless variety and combination of intellectual and moral qualities, in all their stages and manifestations. The wants of mankind could only be adequately met by a book of such surpassing richness and complexity as the Bible. A plain legal statement would not have done it. A simple, colorless, passionless exhibition of the truth, a constitutional abstract and codification of the laws of God in unfigurative, unimpassioned words, would scarcely have converted a soul. But the Scriptures heave with a human life as well as with the Divine

spirit. They interest our affections, our hopes and fears, our wonder and love. Interesting faces look out upon us from this truly "pictorial" book, pictorial though artist had never taken his tool to engrave and illustrate it; some are scarred with passion, some are haggard with fear, but others are sweet and celestial, grave and mystic, with an expression imbued from a world beyond this. The truth is accordingly not merely told, but illustrated, embodied, solidified in acts. For everything good there is an example to win, for everything bad there is an example to warn. So far then as Revelation is history and biography, or changes at times its strain to a dramatic and poetic form, it shows a comprehension such as we look for in vain in the Veds of the Hindoos, or the Koran. The Almighty moves forth in his power and love, but he is attended by groups of his children, toiling, suffering, ecstatic, glorified, showing forth all that is highest and deepest in their nature as spiritual beings, in their attitude towards Him, towards one another, and towards their future and eternal destiny. In this light there are no characters like the Bible characters, and none have seized so profoundly on the imagination of the artist as well as the faith of the saint. These advantages of an historical and characterized revelation are fulfilled not only in relation to the lower and preliminary elements of truth; but Jesus came also to reduce the loftiest ideal to a life, to give the diamond a golden setting. "For," says the Epistle to the Hebrews,

“verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren; that he might be a merciful and faithful High-Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.”

III. I pass to *Languages and Books*. — In two principal languages, Hebrew and Greek, with a few passages in the Chaldee, — in sixty-six books, written by at least thirty-nine authors, — the Jewish and Christian Scriptures present that fertility of human genius, as well as of sacred truth, that fitly entitles it to be called the Bible, THE BOOK.

As *one book*, there is something beautiful in the idea, that between its lids is treasured up an amount of wisdom and truth in reference to life, such as the combined literature of the world in all ages and nations might, however diligently sifted and extracted, be challenged in vain to produce. The binding up of the works of the earlier with those of the later dispensation may have the ill effect to put Moses on a basis of equal authority with Christ to some minds, but there is at least the benefit of presenting the whole system, from its earliest dawn to its last development, in one sizable volume. Or, if we come to the New Testament, we find in a range less than that of an ordinary history or tale of fiction the condensed lessons, life, deeds, death, resurrection, and

ascension of the Son of God, the characters and teachings of his disciples, the history of the young Church, with its early persecutions and controversies, and the predictions of its final glory.

Language, it is true, is a human and imperfect method of communication, but so are all mediums. The very fact that we are finite implies of course that all our circumstances, means of access from mind to mind, are likewise finite and imperfect. Revelation in this aspect sustains the closest analogy with all the gifts of God. All are liable to be misunderstood and to be abused, and the truth itself may become a savor of death unto death. In fact wisdom appears in this very provision. For if Revelation were demonstration, if the truths of our moral nature were based upon the same ground as those of mathematics, if it were as easy to show, for instance, the truth of our immortality, as to prove the forty-fifth problem of Euclid, where would be man's free moral agency, his room for choice, for the working of his affections and preferences, and all those delicate operations of the mind, by which the truth may become, so to speak, his truth, realized, domesticated, and lived by him? The Great Will of all wishes not to override our wills, nor His intellect to overpower ours. For while His communications have authority, they do not encroach on our freedom. So that even Revelation is not open vision. It has its veil untaken away. We read it in a human language, in an ancient language or a translation, and

more or less of error must mix with the instrument of communication. Then too we read it with our erroneous, prejudiced, though truth-seeking minds. The authors also were men of like passions as we are, however exalted by inspiration and by goodness ; and their peculiar illustrations, their feelings, their arguments, their conceptions, all appear on the page. It is in vain to say that the whole value of Revelation is destroyed by its liability to these errors, for then we should include all the blessings of life in the same sweeping conclusion. The very air and sunlight may be tortured and perverted into curses instead of benefits. But that wicked cunning of man does not prove the one to be only a deadly breath, nor the other a noxious beam. Revelation was designed to be a positive and incalculable good to man ; but, given to finite creatures, it must have finite limitations and accidents. Had it been written in great letters of fire across the overarching sky, man could still have his option of reading or not the celestial handwriting. Had not only Sinai, but every hill and mountain, thundered forth the solemn message of love and warning, the sound would at last die away on listless ears, as do indeed the thunders of the sky, the cataract, and the ocean. God *has* written on the heavens a sublime lesson ; he *has* spoken in the winds and waters holy lessons ; but they were not sufficient. Therefore he came nigh, — to use the Biblical phrase, — he came nigh to man, he spoke in prophet and apostle ; he gave man a book, the book, the book

of truth and love; and when properly read, when searched with the spirit and love of the truth, when used, not as a blind charm or spell to work some mysterious and unintelligible change, but to act in harmony with the intellectual and spiritual laws, to enlighten, to move, and to purify the soul, the book of revelation does, and has, in cases without number, become the book of salvation. "Thy creatures," said the greatest English philosopher in a prayer, "have been my books, but thy Scriptures much more. I have sought thee in the courts, fields, and gardens, but I have found thee in thy temples."

Here are flowers of every hue and fragrance, fruits of every taste and nutriment. The sinner cannot read far without meeting with his warning, nor the saint without hearing his beatitude, nor the sad without alighting upon his consolation, nor the weak without touching the wand of spiritual strength, nor the poor without opening the mine of heavenly treasures, nor the rich without being reminded that they brought nothing into this world, and that they can carry nothing out. When did we open this book, and our eyes not rest upon a sentence that seemed to have a meaning for us? Dr. Greenwood once remarked, that he always liked to sweeten his mind with some text from the Bible before retiring to rest at night. When did we peruse it carefully and reflectingly, and not find something that we never thought of before? "Every time I read the Bible," said Mr. Adams, "I understand some passages which

I never understood before." When did we bring to this volume our hearts, sick with life, pierced with its thorns, torn and wounded with its sorrows, torpid in moral sense, and not discover what rekindled as by the breath of heaven our dying resolutions, harmonized anew to the eternal song of gratitude the heart-strings jangled and out of tune, and sent the thrilling conviction through all the recesses of the inner world, that we belong to God, and God to us, in ties never to be broken? Here angels sing; here Christ pleads; here God commands; here heaven shines; here eternity speaks. Man, weak, misguided, forgetful, rash, earth-bound man, with all his sins, sorrows, and cares heavy about him, but with all the sensibilities of an immortal nature, cannot come to such a book, and not find in its generous abundance, its king's feast, some food for his appetite, some delicacy for his convalescence, or some bread for his strength. The very things that make it an imperfect book in itself, as a work of art, make it a perfect book for his case as a sinner. Its artlessness is its adaptation; its variety is its power; its human aspects are its cords of sympathy, and its need of study and research leave man free, so that his goodness shall be his own choice, aided, but not necessitated, by higher power.

IV. *Miracles.* This is one important feature of the manner of Revelation. Some are so constituted, that miracles seem rather to obstruct than advance their faith; some so pure, that they listen and obey the truth for the truth's sake. But the most of us

are so earthly-minded that some extraneous means to arouse us from indifference are needed. We want a rap from the Master's desk to remind us that he has something of importance to say, to which he wishes us to hearken. We want a bell rung to call us to the temple of the Lord to receive his gracious message. Miracles are that rap and that bell. They prove nothing by their solitary selves. And one egregious error in reasoning upon them has been the severance of miracles from the great end with which they are connected. It would be hard to defend miracles in general, but not the Christian miracles; for they subserve a great and good end, worthy of the interposing finger of God. We should hardly have expected that disclosures of such radiant truth and love would have been made, unless even the brute elements had broken out into articulate assent to them, the sky opened, the dove descended, and the heavens thundered.

All along, too, in speaking of his signs and wonders, Jesus very remarkably and clearly points out their office. It was that men might believe on him, and believing, have life. They added no weight to the truth as truth, but they did add weight to truth, as received by the ignorant, the degraded, and the inattentive. They spoke to their wonder and marvellousness and curiosity, traits that never die out of the lowest specimens of mankind. Miracles were the handwriting, the sign-manual, that the messenger spoke not in his own name, but by the authority of

his Sovereign. They arrested, seized men's attention. Everywhere Jesus had throngs to hear him, the first marked attraction being that he healed the sick, raised the dead, and did the works which no man could do unless God were with him. His wonderful deeds become as much a part, and a natural and expected part, of his life, as his wonderful words. We should have thought it strange if so great and good a spirit had not touched the secret springs of the universe: it was a sign and token that God was with him, and when other things agreed with it, a perfect and persuasive sign,—the highest, crowning evidence of a Divine mission.

Thus viewed, miracles, instead of being an ex-crescence, become of the sum and substance of the revelation itself. Their presence is not strange; their absence would have been. The burden of proof would seem to be, since such and such other things were,—perfect truth, and love, and a perfect life,—to show not that miracles were, but that they were not.

Then the additional thing to be considered is the evidence of them to us. If we can trust our senses, can we trust imperfect human evidence? Hume says we cannot. He contends, it is more likely that men would lie, or that they would be deceived, than that a miracle would be wrought. Stronger testimony, it is true, would seem to be demanded, but the incredibility of miracles is not so great but that it can be reasonably overcome, and we believe has

been, in the case of the Christian Revelation. A jury of twelve men decide questions of life and liberty upon weaker evidence than is afforded in the Gospels for the fact of miracles. Men daily act in the business world and hang their fortunes upon contingencies more remote and perilous than he does his faith who receives the miracles in full confidence. But time does not allow the further prosecution of this point.

V. *Institutions and Ordinances.*—The manner of Revelation illustrates its wisdom, not only in its original bequest, but also in its means of perpetuity, diffusion, and influence. Man is addressed as a being of sense as well as of soul. The embodiment of the truth in a book is one instance, and its transmission so little corrupted through so many ages, and its spread over the earth, its numerous versions into different languages, all attest the fitness of the means to the end, and verify literally the words that “the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever.”

But Revelation also has its institutions and ordinances, and we behold in these likewise the same skill in suiting cause to effect.

The institutions of Moses, however puerile they may seem to a Christian, were yet admirably adapted to raise up a low and barbarous people, and give a race of idolaters the knowledge and worship of the One True and Living God. They were in truth an infant school, seemingly very humble and rudimen-

tary, but in their place and time, and for their end, just as needful as the most advanced institutions to Christendom. The illustrious end dignifies the means. That end was the best we can conceive of, to bring the creature into communion with the Creator, to raise the fallen child into the arms of the Heavenly Father. And the event testified that the agencies were effectual. The standard of a true faith was established. Idolatry began to retreat. By the lessons and discipline of centuries, the Jews were weaned from their proneness to fall down and worship the works of their own hands, and a way was opened for the still higher truths of the Christian Revelation. Not a thread too many, then, we may say, was there in that old tapestry of the Jewish tabernacle, not a lamb or dove offered for naught in those sacrifices of thousands of years; not a shekel was levied in vain for that gorgeous temple service, nor a splendor too dazzling encircled the high-priest and his attendants in their garb; for they were each and all an education to the Jews. And as such, however insignificant as single parts, they grow into greatness and dignity when combined together, and viewed as the polity of the Divine commonwealth; for while all the rest of men were worshipping stocks and stones, leeks and onions, snakes and crocodiles, and while polished Greece had her temples to the unknown God, and proud Rome deified her own sons, the Hebrew slaves from Egypt were rising up and paying homage to the Eternal King of kings.

But if we turn to the Christian Revelation, the institutions are more simple, as becomes a more perfect faith and spirituality. What is adopted from the Jewish system — as the use of one day in seven for religious purposes, baptism, the worship of the synagogue, and the Passover celebration — is changed rather by example than specific command, lest too much importance should be attached to them, to correspond to the ideas of the new dispensation. The Sabbath becomes a day for religious and social worship, the commemoration on the first day of the week of the resurrection of our Lord. The rite of baptism, by which proselytes were received from Gentilism, is adopted to signify a spiritual washing and purity from sin, and dedication to Christ and God. The synagogue service is converted into the adoration of the Universal Father of Jew and Gentile, and the faith of his Son, the Messiah. The Passover becomes the pathetic emblem of “the lamb slain from the foundation of the world,” and “the showing of the Lord’s death until he come” in the fulness of his religion. The establishment of a Church, or body of believers, in which these things should be perpetuated, was just as natural and necessary, as constitutional laws and institutions for the perpetuity of freedom. But no undue stress was laid on them, as all-essential. They come recommended by example rather than by explicit precept. But they have existed, and probably will exist in every age, in various modes, but yet expressing the

same leading purpose. They serve to keep that ethereal spirit of faith and Christian devotion from evaporating, which would otherwise, like some exquisite perfume, exhale to the general air and be lost. They seem to be needful to creatures of flesh and blood, of days and mortal life, as remembrances of the great things of the spirit, the monumental facts of a world's salvation and a divine interposition. Forms are not absolute, but relative; not essential, but important; they have a place, but it is not the first place. They are a species of gigantic language, whose letters are facts and whose sentences are customs. They are to be observed, not for their own sake, but for the spiritual purport they imply and convey. Thus kept, they are vital and efficacious, and they are never livingly observed without leaving behind them most precious results in refinement and spirituality of character.

The manner of Revelation is thus indicative of a Supreme Designer, in relation, — 1st. To the extent of time through which it extended; 2d. The agencies and examples by which it was effected; 3d. The medium of languages and books through which it is diffused, after its oral communication ceased; 4th. The miracles by which it was impressively attested to an unbelieving world; and 5th. The institutions and ordinances by which it is perpetuated. In the natural world it is a great awakener of devotion to the Most High Creator, to see in how many ways there is a fitness of means to ends, and kindness shown in

every least thing. But the economy of Nature is paired by the economy of Grace. To the Christian, the contemplation of the fitness and harmonies and adaptations of Revelation, the spiritual creation, superinduced on the other and natural creation, and constituting its crown of glory, ought even more to inspire a very jubilee of praise and honor to the Infinite Father of Christ and men.

DISCOURSE III.



REVELATION AND REASON.

UNDERSTANDEST THOU WHAT THOU READEST ? — Acts viii. 30.

SURELY it was a beautiful exemplification of the worth of conscientiousness in the pursuit of truth, that the honest-minded Ethiopian should receive a special visit from the inspired messenger, to scatter his ignorance with the beams of heavenly light, whilst the walls of Jerusalem held many a disdainful doctor of the law, who was allowed to hug his conceited wisdom unvisited by the dayspring from on high. But the eunuch carried in his swarthy bosom, not only a truth-loving and truth-seeking heart, but also the power of judging between truth and error, — a portion of the universal reason, a spark of the divine intelligence, which constituted him rational, and capacitated him to receive the Gospel. To that faculty Philip appealed, and asked him, “Understandest thou what thou readest?” With a consciousness of its possession, with a straightforward frankness, and withal humility, he replied, “How can I, except some man should guide me?” And he

desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him." It was not enough that his heart was sincere and his piety acceptable ; his understanding also needed to be instructed in new views of the prophet he was reading, and of the Saviour therein predicted. Philip explained, and the Ethiopian believed.

The need of the eunuch was not a solitary one then, nor is it so now. The question of the text might be stereotyped for the majority of the human family, Understandest thou what thou readest, — what thou hearest, — what thou seest ? A mournful ignorance, as well as a mournful sinfulness, overshadows the world. Ignorance, sometimes necessary because of poverty and labor ; ignorance, sometimes, and oftenest in our day, sinful, being the consequence of mental sloth, or moral indifference ; but sometimes — the worst case of all — ignorance upon principle, conscientious, welcome, intentional ignorance. In testimony of which it requires only to be stated, that, at different periods of the Christian era, the following doctrines have been openly avowed and received : — that the truths of the Gospel were not to be spread before the mass, as they lie on the glorious page of Evangelist and Apostle, but were first to be filtered through the heads of popes and priests, and administered to the vulgar as they were able, forsooth, to bear them, — that learning was a dangerous foe to piety, — that an illiterate clergy were the best heralds of the cross, — that reason was not to be employed in matters of faith. Thus, sad to say, igno-

rance has been perpetuated and recommended upon principle. Having eyes, men have conscientiously not seen; having minds, they have, with a sense of duty, not understood. Spotted as the page of history is with drops of blood, wet as it is with tears, foul as it is with vice, it has hardly any darker feature than this, — man divesting himself of his noblest faculty in the pursuit of his noblest end, dethroning his understanding that he might the better learn his duty, putting out his eyes that he might the more clearly see the Sun of Righteousness. It is sad, because it seems like his voluntarily laying aside what makes him human, and confounding himself with the brute race. It is sad, because the principle has hatched a brood of monstrous errors, has killed the vitality of Christian faith at home, and thrown stumbling-blocks in its progress abroad, so that we know not which to call the greatest bane of true religion, conscientious ignorance or wilful perversity.

In accordance with these introductory remarks, the present discourse will be devoted to the vindication and enforcement of the great truth, often overlooked and often misunderstood, that reason is to be used in religion as in other departments of life, and that man's ultimate reliance, for faith and practice, is upon his own mind, aided by God's word.

Man is gifted with a faculty or capacity, variously called, in common parlance, reason, mind, common sense, understanding, that searches, apprehends, and judges concerning all that falls within its cognizance.

By this power, in proportion as it is swayed by hopes and fears, passion and conscience, as it is developed by education or cramped by ignorance, he is able to discriminate between truth and error upon all subjects whatsoever. By this he generalizes principles from facts, and predicts facts from principles. Into this crucible he throws arts, sciences, philosophies, religions, and the dross and the gold are divided. Upon this foundation he relies for opinions, belief, and practice. It is his sun and centre, his point of departure and his point of arrival. For by it he determines the meaning even of Scripture itself, decides, therefore, what to believe, what do, whom worship, and which of the numerous and increasing theories of Christianity he shall adopt as his own.

This capacity is a divine principle in the human soul, as well as Revelation a divine communication. Both are the offspring of the Deity. This faculty is divine, as it is the direct handiwork of the Creator, not an inheritance from Adam, for "there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding." From moment to moment, he impregnates it with his celestial fire, gives it its constant supply, and speaks through it with his venerable authority, which none shall gainsay with impunity. It is divine, as it lifts man above all other creatures of the earth, gives him a citizenship and a fellowship with the spiritual intelligences of higher worlds, and distantly assimilates the finite child to the Infinite Father, enabling us to "be followers of God, as dear children."

Still man may pervert it. What does he not pervert? It is not infallible, like Revelation; but it is the instrument which God has given us to ascertain the import of even Revelation. He who renounces it abandons one of the highest prerogatives of his being. He who brings against it "a railing accusation," does nothing less than slander the most illustrious specimen of the Divine workmanship in the world. He who leaves it undeveloped, or allows it to languish and decay, commits a deadlier suicide than taking the bodily life. He who loses it and becomes insane, is justly deemed the most unfortunate of his kind, as absolved even from moral accountability, dead to the power of improvement, and, for the time being, sunken into a condition as much worse than that of the dumb animal, as there remain to him greater powers for his own and others' injury. Yet, even in its wildest aberrations, it retains the glimmerings of its original heavenly light. Its ruins, like those of the fallen archangel, betoken its primitive splendor and might. The craziest fanatic sometimes speaks astonishing truths, and the walls of the lunatic's abode have been scribbled over with verses of uncommon beauty and power.

This faculty, in conjunction with conscience and the moral affections, composes man's religious nature, and enables him to receive a revelation. Thus he has a foundation to stand upon. He can understand and apply to his wants the gracious communications of his Maker, and thereby "lay hold on eternal life."

Since, then, man was endowed with reason, it was to be expected that, if God made a revelation of his will, it would address itself to, and harmonize with, that capacity in the recipient. Since we were created with religious natures and wants, it would have been a signal and perplexing departure from the customary modes of our Heavenly Father's administration, if the religion he had commissioned to exercise our natures and satisfy our wants had warred against them.

What was to be expected has been fulfilled. The truths of the Gospel possess the same congeniality with the human soul, as bread with the stomach, and light with the eye. There is no discrepancy between the workmanship of God in the soul and the ways of God in the Bible, but the nicest concord, at once beautiful and convincing. The Almighty does not contradict himself. Reason and Revelation are twin agents, co-workers in the cause of the soul. The mind and truth, the soul and its Saviour, have a reciprocal fitness each for each. Revelation is the teacher, Reason the pupil. Revelation assists, perfects, does not supplant or dethrone Reason. Without Revelation, Reason were in a cold, pale twilight; with it, man is surrounded with the pure light and warm flush of day. Without Reason, Revelation were of no more significance to man than to the ox or the dove; with it, the saving truth is received, loved, and followed. How many works have been powerfully and successfully written to elucidate the internal evidence of Revelation, a large part of

which consists in the facts of this exquisite harmony between the soul's capacities and needs, and the truths and promises of the Gospel!

But in dwelling thus upon the alliance between Revelation and Reason, it is not in the least implied that man does not receive, through the Scriptures, original, vital communications from his Maker. They teach many things above Reason, but not one syllable against it. What the wisest sages had speculated about with painful uncertainty, Jesus taught with the assurance of consciousness. The human heart, the Divine counsels, and the secrets of eternity were unveiled in his discourse, and stood forth as breathing realities. Old truths sprang into new life and power. What Reason in her best champions had only felt after, never fully found, still less proved and efficiently spread amongst men, was now clothed with gigantic might and celestial beauty, and went forth "conquering and to conquer." He gave us a Heavenly Father, and opened a heavenly hereafter before us, — thus giving the soul, in its dark and discouraging struggle with evil, all needed and possible guidance, strength, warning, and consolation. All is plain and simple, yet how glorious!

"I hope," said the distinguished philosopher and Christian, John Locke, "it is no derogation to the Christian religion to say, that the fundamentals of it, that is, all that is necessary to be believed in by all men, are easy to be understood by all men. This I thought myself authorized to say, by the easy and

very intelligible articles insisted on by our Saviour and his Apostles, which contain nothing but what could be understood by the bulk of mankind." Men like Locke, Milton, and Newton, the mightiest spirits God ever kindled on earth, have testified to the reasonableness of Christianity. Locke wrote a book to show it. Revelation has come from their searching investigations, like thrice-refined gold from the furnace, bright and undiminished. Its evidences, its doctrines, its promises, its services, are all seen to be founded in nature and common sense, as well as guaranteed by the explicit will of the Most High. They have consequently remained fixed and firm against the assaults of acute infidels, as the steady earth beneath the gusty winds that sweep over its surface. They commend themselves to the good understandings of all, and testify that religion is eminently "a reasonable service."

But here a distinction is needed that is often neglected. Because Revelation does not conflict with Reason, though it soars above Reason, it is far from being asserted that it does not contend against human nature and character, under some of their aspects. It harmonizes with the higher, but clashes with the lower nature. This is our battle, spirit against flesh, and flesh against spirit; in taking sides with the spirit, Revelation therefore, fights against the dominion of the flesh. Indeed, in that identical conflict consists its virtue, its use; just as medicine makes an enemy of disease, but not of the human

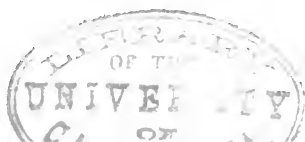
constitution. Religion struggles, as for life, against the passions and appetites in their excesses. Yet this contest is often mistaken for a discordance between Reason and Revelation, whereas it is a notable instance of their agreement. For when Reason was too weak of her single strength to cope with the lusts of the flesh, Revelation descended as a kind friend to restore the reins to the rightful possessor. The strict Scripture doctrines may strive against worldliness and selfishness; they may prick men's hearts with pungent expositions of truth, earnest enforcements of duty;—Heaven be thanked that they do!—but they are all justified by Reason. They are never wanting in the most perfect rationality. For example, the truths that God is One, is a Spirit, is to be worshipped in spirit and truth, are hard truths for a sensual world to feel and obey, but they stand good to Reason. The command to love our enemies is probably the hardest in the Bible to comply with, honestly and heartily, but not because it is irrational; it is seen, when all the circumstances of the case are considered, to be reasonable, sensible; but because it puts the curb on some of the strongest feelings of the human heart. It is at the antipodes of folly or absurdity, but it enjoins self-restraint, forbearance, forgiveness; therefore the natural, that is, the sensual, selfish man, receives it not, loves it not. So, universally. In one word, Revelation may conflict with man's evil dispositions, and check his wrong tendencies; it is a noble proof of its divinity and its

efficacy, that it does,—that it makes alliance with Reason and Conscience against their formidable assailants, but with Reason and Conscience it no more wars than with the Supreme Intelligence from which it sprung. Its language is ever that of “truth and soberness,” its spirit a “spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”

Since, therefore, Reason capacitates man for Revelation, and harmonizes with it, we are not surprised, but prepared, to find that Revelation itself enjoins with deep emphasis the exercise of Reason. Perpetually it appeals to the rational principles in man. It invites and urges him to test the disclosures it makes by the light of his God-given spirit, “the elder Scripture.” Unlike some of its friends, so far from denying Reason and frowning upon free investigation, it commands the vigorous action of the mind upon its truths as a duty. Its precepts are, to “search the Scriptures; not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits whether they be of God; to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good; to understand the Scriptures; to judge what is right; to be men and not children in understanding; to be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.” Indeed, what is the aim and sum of Revelation, but God reasoning with and instructing his erring children, making known to them truths above and beyond what their unaided minds could have reached, setting before them motives

loftier than this world could furnish, and leading their hopes and aspirations upward to a life of eternal bliss and glory?

In the next place, it may be remarked, that facts substantiate what has now been said of the connection between Reason and Revelation, so far as the practice of all denominations of Christians extends. Not one exception can be found. All use reason, all appeal to it, all abide by it, or by what to them is Reason. Where is the sect that does not exercise the understanding upon the doctrines of Christianity and the duties of life? Is it said that the Roman Catholic rests his faith on tradition and the infallibility of his Church? Then tradition and the infallibility of his Church are his sufficient reasons for his faith. He keeps on good terms with his understanding. Is it asserted that the mystic believes in emotions, feelings, divine promptings, which he can neither analyze nor understand? Then certain operations of his own mind are his ultimate grounds of faith, and to him entirely rational grounds. He has no quarrel with Reason in his own soul, however mad he may seem to other men. Is it stated that some believe in doctrines which present a downright contradiction to Reason,—as that there are three persons in the Godhead, and yet only one God? Still their faith is just as rational to them as mine is to me, who believe that there is only one person in the Godhead. Their faith is placed on that which has to them the greatest evidence of its being true,



and is accordingly the most reasonable to them. Is it said that they place their faith, not on Reason, but on the Bible? In that case, the Bible is their Reason; at least, they have reasons for making the Bible their Reason. Thus all sects do, in fact, whatever may be said to the contrary, appeal to Reason, first or last, in one way or another. What are religious controversies, in which all sects have participated, but reasonings on this side and that, to develop the relative strength of each? What are the volumes of Evidences of Christianity, of which every denomination has contributed its useful portion, but a solemn appeal at the bar of Reason in vindication of the truths of the Bible? What are Commentaries, but helps to make the Scriptures better understood, to take faith off of the ground of implicit trust, and plant it more on that of personal knowledge and conviction? What are Sunday schools, sermons, lectures, tracts, periodicals, but means to make more intelligent, as well as more pious Christians? Is it not most evident, from this review of the beliefs and operations of all Christian denominations, that they use Reason in religion as in other departments of life? These interrogations are so plain, that none but affirmative answers can be given them. It will therefore be seen to be a mistake, or to be mere affectation, to say that Reason is not to be employed in matters of faith and practice, when in truth all use it habitually, and must use it more or less, or sink themselves to the level of the irrational brute. No

man can, no man does, proceed one step in belief, in interpretation, in conduct, without the guidance of Reason.

Wherein, then, it may occur to some minds, are Unitarians, or Rational Christians, different in respect to this point from other sects, which would perhaps deem the epithet Rational to be a stigma? They are said to be different; it is rumored all over the country that they are a denomination by themselves; Christendom looks upon them with suspicion. What is their dark offence? They reason, but so does the Roman Catholic. They use their understandings in religion, but so does the Trinitarian. They throw the lights of Biblical criticism upon the Holy Scriptures, that they may the more nearly arrive at the true sense of the inspired volume, but so equally does the Episcopalian. What then is their crime? Wherein is the point of difference? Simply, so far as yet appears, the distinction consists in their arriving at different results by the exercise of Reason; not in their using Reason, and other sects not using it. They lay stress upon the tenet which all actually employ. They avow earnestly the principle which all adopt, if we may judge of their rules by their practice.

But here a new element appears. It is charged upon them that they make Reason their goddess, that they exalt her above Revelation. If this were so, then they would indeed be a unique sect. But is it so? Let us see whether, in matters of faith

and in the interpretation of the Scriptures, they do not take the same course which all take.

First, in regard to Faith. It may be laid down as an axiom, that belief always rests on evidence of some sort, and that where there is no evidence, it is quite impossible that there should be any belief; the nature of faith precludes it. The evidence may be small, — may be unsatisfactory to the majority of men; but evidence of some kind, of some degree, is indispensable. If a doctrine is positively irrational, it may be a call with here and there a mind to put forth more faith to embrace it, but with most it would prevent all faith whatever. But even in this extreme case, the Reason that is wanting in one direction is supplied in another, else faith were still an impossibility. Thus some Christians believe in doctrines which they acknowledge are irrational, because the creed, or Church, or Bible, as they suppose, upholds them; and then the creed, or Church, or Bible, is their reason and evidence, though all other reason and evidence be against them. The Unitarian exercises his reason in settling the foundations of his faith; thus doing as all others do, and must do. But the question arises, Does he not set Reason above Revelation? So it has been reported everywhere. No, never. He finds no occasion for such a competition between the dictates of his mind and the doctrines of the Scriptures. What Revelation teaches, he believes in, because it is perfectly rational, as well as because Revelation teaches it.

Is it inquired, whether he would believe in a doctrine that was entirely irrational, provided the Scriptures contained it? His reply is, that he is not reduced to this alternative of crucifying Reason or renouncing Revelation. The supposition is impossible. Christianity never does teach any thing but what is reasonable, and therefore nothing but what he can and does believe. It were a daring proposition to advance, that God has contradicted, in one mode of his communication of truth, what he teaches us by another. It is just as absurd to ask, whether we would believe an irrational doctrine because Revelation taught it, as whether we would do a vicious act because Revelation enjoined it. The cases are parallel, but neither is for a moment supposable. The Bible violates neither Reason nor Conscience: it offers no irrational doctrine for us to believe, — it commands no vicious deed for us to do.

To the view now presented of the necessity of intelligibleness in what we believe, and of evidence as a basis for faith, it is objected, that we are surrounded by mysteries, understand little in reality, and believe in many things which we cannot explain. Two things are confounded in such an objection, which ought to be carefully distinguished. I may believe in that which is above Reason, but that is quite different from believing in that which is against Reason. I may believe in mysteries, or, in the popular sense of that word, in many incomprehensible things, — things above men's experience and knowl-

edge. I believe, for example, in the existence of God, which I can neither comprehend nor explain. But observe, I believe in the fact that he exists, which fact is supported by most abundant proof; I do not believe in the mode of his existence; I am not assured how he fills all with his august presence, and I can only believe as far as I have evidence for my belief. So far as his existence is a fact, I believe in it; so far as it is a mystery, I cannot believe in it, because I have no grounds for belief. I believe in the revolutions of worlds around worlds, through all the boundless heavens above and below, but I cannot understand nor elucidate the nature and essence of those centripetal and centrifugal forces that bind those stupendous masses in the exactest harmony as they fly on their swift courses. I believe in the fact for which there is good evidence, not in the mystery, the how, for which there is none. The secrets of attraction and gravitation cannot be classed amongst matters of faith, because there is no proof what those secrets are. The facts are all that can come within the bounds of credence. Nobody else, any more than the Unitarian, believes in irrational doctrines, that is, doctrines irrational to the believer. It cannot be done. The doctrines must move over from the ground of No-Reason to the ground of Reason, before they can be believed. Evidence of many kinds there is, but evidence of some kind there must be, or belief is dead. The most absurd things in the world have been believed, not

as they were absurd, but as they had some basis of Reason, however narrow or shallow. To speak of Faith without Reason would be to say that there were rivers without fountains, and effects without causes. In exercising his Reason in matters of Faith, the Unitarian does no more than, nor differently from, all other Christian believers.

Next, turn to the interpretation of the Scriptures. Unitarians are accused of setting their reason up as a standard above the Bible. But they do no such thing. They but do what all do. If they err, then all err, in using their minds to understand the word of God. The Bible is our standard. What it teaches respecting truth and duty, we receive, we believe in, with implicit love and trust. But the grand, dividing question is, What *does* it teach? It is not the same thing, the same sense, to all. The Bible is nothing more nor less than the meaning of the Bible, and that meaning varies with every mind. It teaches one set of doctrines to the Baptist, another to the Quaker, another to the Methodist. "Men labor," as Cecil acutely remarked, "to make the Bible *their* Bible." In fact, every sect has its own Bible, inasmuch as each has its own sense of the book. The Scriptures, then, are the standard, but it is a different standard to different men. Religious controversy is the struggle which each denomination makes to render the Bible *their* Bible. Reformation in the Christian Church is but the constant bringing of man's sense of Sacred Writ nearer

to its absolute sense, the one God gave it; the advancement of the imperfect human idea up to the glorious clear significance of the Divine Mind.

Nor is this difficulty of arriving at the absolute truth of the sacred volume escaped by the instrumentality of creeds. For if not at first, which is generally the case, yet afterwards, the creed, like the Bible, conveys different senses to different minds, and so what was designed for an explanation soon needs itself to be explained. Hence arise ambiguities and discussions; the sectarian banner becomes itself the signal of war; and old churches and assemblies fall to pieces to be reorganized into new ones.

Since, then, the Bible, though the directory of faith and practice, is one thing to one man and another to another, according to what each understands it to teach; since there is variance of belief even touching fundamental points, — what is done by all, but to fall back on their own minds, enlightened by Revelation, as the last criterion? Each one claims and allows the supremacy of the Scriptures, but he must rely on his own mind to tell him what they teach. Probably no two persons, who have read the Bible understandingly, and reflected earnestly on religious subjects, think exactly alike. The more men reflect, the more they differ, and the smaller their differences become, because they approximate continually nearer to absolute truth. Modern civilization and free thought multiply sects in profusion, but their influence is to make “the

crooked straight, and the rough ways smooth," and to unite all upon the essentials of Christianity.

From these remarks, it will be clear to every candid mind, that in regard to the interpretation of the Scriptures, as well as in matters of faith, Unitarians proceed upon no novel and dangerous principle of using their Reason, none which is not equally adopted by others as their rule. Precisely like other denominations, they refer to the Bible as their standard, and to their minds to inform them what that standard requires. They would not only read, but understand, the word with the faculties God has bestowed for that purpose. They hold that he intended his Revelation should be understood, as indeed with what propriety could it be called a Revelation, if it were not intelligible? Where were the value of faith if it were placed at random? — where the merit of conduct, if action were indiscriminate?

In pursuance, then, of what has been intimated, it is proper to repeat, that Unitarians differ from other Christians, not in their using Reason, or exalting it above Revelation, but in their coming to different conclusions by the exercise of that faculty. This is "the very head and front of their offending." Reason teaches them to believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures; the miracles of Christ; his unquestionable authority as the Son of God and Saviour of men; in the reconciliation, or atonement, of men to God through him; in the influences of the Holy Spirit, the immortality of the soul, and

future retribution. These they receive and cherish, as their guide in life, their hope in death. These, and other subsidiary doctrines, kindred to them, seem to be as clearly taught in the Scriptures as language allows. They cannot believe in the Trinity, in total depravity, in the popular doctrines of the atonement and of election, because they do not find them in the Bible to believe. Revelation, as well as Reason, disowns them. But they would rather their "right hand might forget her cunning," and their "tongue cleave to the roof of their mouth," than do any violence to the blessed charter of their privileges and their hopes. They would not for worlds be guilty of perverting one word that fell from the sinless lips of Jesus, or the inspired tongue of the Apostles. They use their own minds in determining what the Book of Heaven teaches, because they deeply reverence, not because they "lightly esteem" that volume. But, with Paul, "they had rather speak five words with their understanding, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." They feel that Reason is fallible, therefore they cannot trust another man's, but must hearken to their own. Reason is fallible; therefore they would use it with great care and activity, that it might become more and more trustworthy. Reason is fallible; it may be dimmed by worldliness, or warped by prejudice, or stormed by passion; therefore they cannot dogmatize, for they may be in the wrong, and others in the right. They marvel how others can dogmatize, for

they may be in the wrong, and themselves in the right. They see no danger in the use of Reason, they see every danger from its neglect and abuse.

Finally, they feel a solemn and awful responsibility, resting upon every individual soul, to decide for itself, according to its best light, what it shall believe and do. The interest here is personal, not social. Human authority is not admissible. Calvin cannot decide, Arminius cannot decide, for me; I must decide for myself. God has put it upon me, and I cannot, I dare not, shake off the responsibility. It will not do for the Council of Nice, nor the Synod of Dort, nor the Assembly of Westminster, to step in between me and my Master, and determine for me what he taught, and what I must receive. Solemn interests I have at stake. A mighty business is upon my hands, which cannot be done by proxy, though popes and councils should tender their aid. The soul, in such high matters, must do its own work with God's assistance, not with man's interference. My own free mind is worth more to me in settling the grounds of my duty and my destiny, than the wisdom of the whole world besides, backed by all its great names, and its vast authority. My conscience, my judgment, my reason, — these living principles in my soul, set there by God, kindled by his inspiration, fanned by his spirit, — these hold me accountable to him with an adamant strength. If through them I have approved myself to him, my Almighty Father, what are the reproofs of friends,

and the slanders of enemies, and the thunders of councils and assemblies? — The mere blast of an adverse wind, the peltings of the outward storm,— they cannot touch the quiet peace of the heart. But — fearful contrast! — if I have from the motives of temporal expediency, from the fear or the favor of man, wrested my conscience, done despite to the good spirit, and embraced a creed, or led a life, which is condemned by that mind God gave me as a governor, woe is me! I am undone, the sweet approval of the heart is gone. “If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.”

DISCOURSE IV.



THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS.*

FOR THERE IS ONE GOD, AND ONE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND
MEN, THE MAN CHRIST JESUS. — 1 Tim. ii. 5.

MY CHRISTIAN FRIENDS AND BRETHREN:—

THE work of erecting a house of public worship has been completed, and you have now assembled to dedicate it as a holy offering to Almighty God. To you this must be a joyful occasion, for your laudable wishes have been accomplished under a gracious Providence, and your sacrifice is ready to be offered. You have now come to hallow these walls for the first time — may the last be far distant! — with devout meditation, prayer, and thanksgiving to the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. You would, in accordance with the ancient example, “keep the dedication of this house of God with joy.” “You enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise.”

And here let us consider for a few moments, why

* A Discourse delivered at the Dedication of the Unitarian Church in Windsor, Vermont, December 9, 1846.

a joyful and a grateful spirit should fill the heart on this day. Why have you laid these foundations, and reared these walls, and garnished them with beauty? We answer, for the most glorious object in the universe; for the solemn worship of the Infinite Creator, for the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, the conversion of sinners, the culture of the spiritual life, the salvation of immortal souls. The world knows nothing so great as these ends. There are splendid edifices upon the earth, — the mighty pyramid, the colossal amphitheatre, the magnificent pagoda, the golden palaces of kingdoms, the massive fortresses of war, the brilliant galleries of art, the proud gates of cities, the storied columns of victory, the marble monuments of the dead, which the daily sun looks down upon, as he turns his glory upon the successive countries of the rolling globe; but we hesitate not to say, that he beholds no structure, built with human hands, devoted to so high a purpose as the humblest Christian sanctuary. There may be no pillars of porphyry or gilded tapestry for the outward adorning, but there is the purer glory of a heavenly consecration and a godlike use overshadowing its lowly walls. The cloud of the Divine Presence hovers over it. It is irradiated with light from the heaven of heavens. It is as the ladder, seen in the vision of old, whose top reached to heaven, whereon angels were ascending and descending, and an alliance was kept up with the skies. It is as the antechamber to the spiritual world, where man comes to humble him-

self under the mighty hand of God, and plead the promises of his everlasting covenant. "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

But after speaking thus in general of the high and holy object to which this house of Christian worship is devoted, it is natural and proper, on an occasion which brings together so many friends and strangers, who take a deep interest in your welfare, and inquire after your ways, that you should desire some more particular statement of the faith as held by Unitarian Christians. To some it may be unknown and new, and to others odious, and odious because unknown. To those to whom it is dear, its discussion will be welcome. To those who are anxiously inquiring for the way of truth, to speak of it may be timely and profitable, and, we would hope, to all not without interest. For if we feel ourselves to be grounded in the truth, we shall not fear lest the weakness of others' errors will overcome the strength of our truth. God grant both to speaker and hearer the spirit of truth, candor, and charity!

To begin with the foundation doctrine of a Great First Cause of all things: as Unitarian Christians, we believe, in the language of the text, in "one God," and in only one. "The first of all the commandments," said Christ, "is, Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord." We contend that by one God is as strictly meant one being, as, when a man is spoken of, one being, and only one, is under-

stood, and not two persons, or three in one. The use of the personal pronouns in the Scriptures demonstrates this position. The Jews walked in the light of revelation, and never worshipped, and do not to this day, more than one God. Only one God, supreme and indivisible, is revealed in the Old Testament, and, as we believe, only one in the New. Nature knows but one Creator, Providence but one Guide, and the soul but one object of the highest adoration. It is the bane of idolatry, that it leads men to worship gods many, and lords many; and it is a fearful injury to the pure religion of Jesus to present to the worshipper more than one God to be adored, and from whom we supplicate spiritual favors. For if we address two or three persons or natures or distinctions in the Godhead, we must have two or three separate beings in our mind at the same time, and thus be distracted in our attention, while our thoughts are flitting from one to another; for it is an impossibility to regard three as literally one, or one as three. Happily, however, these difficulties do not often occur, so much stronger is the word of God than human traditions and theories, for we seldom hear even from Trinitarians themselves any prayers except those directed to the Father Supreme, and we would only ask that what is disused in practice might also be stricken from the creed.

But not to dwell longer on this tenet of the absolute oneness of God, which gives the name of Unitarian to our body, we pass to another point in our

belief, which we would fain bring out into clearer view than has been done in past ages of the Church. What adds an immeasurable interest to our faith in one God is not so much the revelation of what are called by theologians his natural attributes, as his unity, omnipresence, and omniscience, — though that is much, — as of his moral character, most impressively condensed in those words which our Saviour so often used, “Our Father.” The one God is our Parent. What a word, if we will think of it, is here! In our familiarity with it, we do not perceive its strange beauty, its infinite tenderness. God, our Father! the humble word of time and earthly relationship, the household title, the endeared name of home, lifted up on high and applied to Him who is the Infinite King of the Universe, the Mighty Maker and Head of worlds and systems and beings without number or bound! What kindness is here, and what knowledge of human wants! Could there have been a more comforting, enlightening, strengthening, cheering revelation out of the depths of infinity and eternity, than this of the Fatherhood of God? Was it not the very last blessing which Heaven even in its inexhaustible riches could bestow, to whisper in the ear of the tempted, stricken child of mortality, “Thy Father in heaven”? In heaven, and yet thy Father! So high, so pure over all, and yet setting his love upon the feeble creature of the earth, caring for him with an infinite wisdom, and pitying and pardoning him with an everlasting mer-

cy! There is nothing like it in the world. It is the crown of the Gospel of Christ. It is the essence of Christianity. When men come around us with their dark doctrines, that seem almost to forbid the sun rising on the evil and on the good, and the rain descending on the just and on the unjust, we ask no stronger refutation than this, — “Our Father, who art in heaven.” When our friends are few, and our days evil, and our hearts fail us, we will open the blessed volume of inspiration, and seeing there these all-illuminating, all-cheering words, OUR FATHER, all shall be well again. This shall be our light, our cordial, our anchor of eternal hope. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

In connection with this doctrine of the fatherly character of God, and as a consequence from it, we believe in, and with all earnestness would proclaim, the Brotherhood of man with man, without exception of color, condition, or country. God is our Father; therefore man, his creature and the child of his love, is our brother. These terms *father* and *brother* are figurative, taken from our earthly relationship, and therefore imperfect in a degree. For God is more than father, man is more than brother. In both cases, the tie is spiritual and immortal. It relates not to the circumstances in which we are born, as do these bonds of kindred, but to the very essence of our being as moral and spiritual creatures. This great doctrine of human brotherhood is the keystone to Christian morality, as the doctrine of God

our Father is to Christian piety. In obedience to it, all wars should for ever cease, all slavery be overthrown, all empty distinctions exploded, all dissensions in the Church be pacified, and everywhere man love, sympathize with, and labor for man as a brother. Haste, O, haste the happy time, when such shall be the state of the world !

In the next place, we would emphasize our faith in Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Though often accused of denying the Lord that bought us, and making the cross of none effect, we nevertheless cherish this faith of salvation from our sins in the name and through the mediation of Christ as the chief thing of life, the highest manifestation of the paternal interest of God in mankind. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." We believe in Jesus Christ, not as God the Son, for we find no such words between the lids of the Bible, though they often may be found in human works, but as the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners, the Mediator between God and man, the Intercessor with the Father. His life was without spot or blemish of sin ; his example of all he taught, perfect ; his teachings, the truth ; his labors, love ; and his death, instinct with a mighty efficacy to reconcile, not God to man, but man to God, and to draw earth within the circle of heaven. We cannot admit that Christ was literally God, or equal with the Almighty ; for he said, "My Father is greater than I" ; and at

another time, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." And when he said at another time, "I and my Father are one," he elsewhere explains what he meant by that oneness, for he prayed that his disciples "might be one, even as we are one." It was not therefore identity of nature, but union of affection, will, and effort. We cannot add a second and third being to the Divine Unity, nor can we divide Christ into two beings or natures, one finite and the other infinite, one human and the other divine, because we cannot find any authority for it in the Scriptures. The same text that says God is one, also declares that the Mediator is one. "For there is ONE God, and ONE Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." We cannot discern a single intimation of the twofold nature of Jesus, either in his own teachings, or those of his Apostles, or in the Christian faith of the first two centuries of our era; and we are constrained therefore to regard it as a mere unauthorized inference from certain texts, a pure theological fiction, to explain the difficulties of the Trinity. Christ may have applied to him both terms, God and man, in a figurative sense, but literally he was neither one nor the other, neither "very God" nor "mere man," but an exalted being midway between the two, or, as the record says, a Mediator. He is like no other, and has neither predecessor nor successor. As there is but one God, so there is, there will be, there needs

to be, but one Christ. He is his own, and not another's, the first-born of a new moral creation, the second Adam to lead on the generations of a new spiritual race. Human classifications are at fault. A new being has appeared upon the earth. We believe, indeed, most firmly in the *divinity* of Christ, namely, that the spirit was given him not by measure, and that he was created, authorized, and sent on a divine mission to save the world; but we reject his *deity*, that is, that he is the second person in the Godhead, "equal in power and glory" with the Supreme Father; not because it is a mystery, for there are many mysteries connected with religion, as there are many in nature and providence; but because it is an absurdity, and a palpable contradiction in terms.

As it regards our views of Salvation, we hold that Jesus Christ saves mankind *from* sin by working a moral change in their hearts, and making them better, holier, spiritually-minded; not that he can save a single soul *in* its sins, by presenting himself as a substitute to avert the doom of the transgressor, and by suffering in his own person in the garden and on the cross all the mountains of miseries and agonies which would otherwise have fallen upon the millions of millions of guilty beings for having broken the laws of their Maker. His mission was not a piece of diplomacy, contrived in the cabinet of Heaven, to clear the wicked by punishing the innocent, but a breathing forth of the love of God, an expression of

his interest and mercy, an instrumentality to work a change, not above, but below,—not in the Divine purposes, but in human life,—to effect the regeneration and sanctification of souls lost in sin. He preached repentance, and, by a necessary consequence, remission of sins; for God is both “*faithful* and *just*, as well as *merciful*, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” He represented the difficulty as not on the part of God, who is, and ever was, ready to have mercy on the returning prodigal, but on the part of man, who is slow to feel his sins as sins, to be sorry for them, and to forsake them. Jesus came not, therefore, to soften God’s law, which is ever the same, but man’s heart, which may be changed. He taught, entreated, lived, died, that men might listen as never before to truth and duty,—that their whole nature might be sanctified to God, and every thought be brought into obedience,—that the will might bow to the supreme will,—that reason and conscience might become to man as the veritable voices of his Maker,—that the two great moral affections, connecting man to man in benevolence, and man to God in piety, might be quickened into living exercise,—and that the pure spiritual aspirations, faith and hope, might take hold of the immortality opened before them,—and that thus, altogether, man, instead of bowing himself down and burying himself in the narrow, selfish, sensual interests bounded by the flesh and time, might take into view the glorious range of a never-ending

state of being beyond the grave, and live to virtue, heaven, God. Hence his lessons come to us, when we are ourselves, as a ray of light to the bewildered traveller, as a draught from the cold spring to a thirsty soul, as the tear of sympathy to the friendless sufferer. Nothing has ever been so beautiful as the Sermon on the Mount, nor so pathetic as the parable of the prodigal son, nor so solemn as the judgment scene, nor so searching as the condemnation of the Scribes and Pharisees. Let them that have ears hear, and let them that have eyes read, and let them that have hearts feel, these divine discourses of the Gospel, until they shall penetrate through the common crust of moral insensibility and worldliness, and reach with a healing power the last recesses of the soul.

Again: we believe in the Holy Spirit, so frequently mentioned in the New Testament, not as a distinct person, being, or even distinction of the Godhead, but as that Godhead itself, God himself, the Father, the Great and Good Spirit, in action, giving Christ his power and wisdom, enabling the Apostles to work miracles, ever guiding, blessing, and saving all, spreading light and love in boundless tides over the moral creation, and at all times and in all places, would we but be sensible to it, gently but powerfully striving, though with perfect consistency with human freedom, to win the sinner from the error of his way. We think there are some who speak of the spirit of God too much, as the ancient prophet did, when ridi-

culing the heathen deity before the priests of Baal, — “He is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.” They speak of times and places, unmindful that the spirit of God is in all places at all times, filling and embosoming all, and if unperceived, it is by the dull mind, and if unfelt, it is by the insensible heart. It is the common faith that God is wisely and benevolently working throughout the realms of Nature, the material universe ; shall we atheistically exclude him from the moral world, from the kingdom of mind, thought, conscience, affection, aspiration ? No. We rejoice to believe that he is with the soul, helping its infirmities, and providing for its wants. We would not give up this faith for worlds. It is the encouragement of prayer. It is the motive to moral effort. It is the blessed assurance that we are not engaged single-handed against the principalities and powers of evil, — the omnipotence of habit, the torrent of example, the fury of the passions, the acquired depravity of the heart, and the cares and follies of the world ; but that we have “a strong-siding champion,” a divine helper, who will suffer no faithful heart to fail in the moral battle, but will bring us off conquerors and more than conquerors. Yes, one of the highest ends of Christ’s mission was to direct man to the Comforter and Sanctifier, and to inspire confidence in his heart of the alliance of spiritual powers in his behalf, working around him and within for his redemption.

In regard to those questions which have so long agitated the world under the head of the Calvinistic and Arminian controversies, we believe there is, as in the topics already touched upon, a medium point, nearer the truth than either side. The law of human opinions is in all matters too much a law of extremes, but nowhere more so than in theology.

Man is depraved, — we cannot open our eyes, and not see it, — but not totally depraved. He is born weak, not evil. He has depraved himself. God “made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions.” His mind is not naturally in a state of sin, for sin is the act of a moral agent, any more than his body is naturally in a state of disease. Sickness is contrary to nature; so is sin the moral disorder contrary to nature. And as we should not take one to the lazaretto or pest-house to exhibit the natural powers of the physical, so we should not seize on crimes and vices as a description of the spiritual constitution. All the propensities are good, all the appetites and passions were inserted for a benevolent purpose, and only when they usurp the throne of reason and conscience, and renounce their allegiance to God, do they change from convenient servants into terrible tyrants. Who would wish or dare to cross out one God-given faculty, were it even one that allied him most to the earth? It were a horror to think of it. Man would then lose his wonderful and fearful adaptation to two worlds, and would be cast forth a poor, mutilated creature. Let us not

think to improve upon the creative skill of the Framers of his body, any more than upon that of the Father of his spirit, nor libel His work, nor make Him the author of sin.

We contend earnestly for the moral freedom of man, and that he is responsible only so far as he is free; that God has richly provided the means and motives of spiritual life, and it depends on him whether he will accept the terms. We cannot indeed do anything, lift a finger, move a step, without God; but we have as much assurance that he will help us, if we help ourselves, in things spiritual, as in things material; in cultivating the soul, as in cultivating our fields. If we will not sow, we shall not reap, is not more true in the earthly than in the Divine husbandry. In a single word, the obstacle is with man. God has provided everything, has made man in his own image, little lower than the angels, crowned him with honor and glory, given him will, reason, conscience, affection, aspiration, set before him the choice of good and evil, life and death; and, to crown all, he speaks audibly from heaven, and says, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." Man cannot change his heart from sin to holiness without God; so he cannot without his coöperation think or stir. But if he will go to work in good earnest, he will soon find there is a mighty power working within and around him, through ten thousand beneficent agencies and influences, to will and to do of its

good pleasure. To the seeking, praying heart, all nature, all providence, all grace, all heaven and earth, time and eternity, bring their holiest contributions of light and love. "All things work together for good to them that love God." "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

The remaining points of belief are the immortality of the spirit, and a future state of righteous retribution, of suffering to the bad and of happiness to the good, as in the present life, only with greater certainty and more exact correspondence. Some assert that a portion of the human family will be saved hereafter, but that the greater part will be sentenced to unchangeable and eternal woe. Others assert that all will be saved, without respect of persons, or distinction of moral character. These doctrines of Calvinism and Universalism are both plain and intelligible, though, we contend, erroneous extremes. We would proclaim a doctrine, if possible, equally plain and intelligible,—that it is rendered to every man in the future world precisely according to his deserts, or, as the Scriptures say, "according to that he hath done in the flesh, whether good or bad." All the good will not enjoy alike,—Lazarus as much as Abraham,—because all are not equally good, and so are not equally prepared to enjoy God and his works. Each vessel may, however, be full; the absolute happiness may be the same, though not the relative, for every vessel may not have the same capacity. On the other hand, all the wicked may not

suffer equally, because there are different depths of guilt; and surely the imperfect justice of human tribunals, that punishes crimes according to their turpitude, must more than be equalled by the equity of the Divine. We believe in a retribution of degrees, of equity, of benevolence, not of "vindictive justice"; and that suffering in all worlds and all states of being, judging by the character of God and the analogy of this life, and the end of man's creation, and by the spirit if not the letter of Scripture, must tend towards a final restoration to virtue and happiness. Still, we presume not to pry into futurity. It becomes us to fear rather than speculate concerning the future state of the wicked; for solemn are the warnings of the sacred word, and fearful the glimpses it gives us into the condition of the impenitent sinner. Of the continuance of future punishment we are not absolutely informed, and we must leave it in the hands of Him who will employ suffering as long as it is needed, and no longer. For to predicate absolute eternity of future woe from the terms in the Bible, *everlasting* and *eternal*, and other words of like import, is to overlook the analogy of faith, and comparison of Scripture with Scripture; for these terms are elsewhere applied to things of indefinitely long period, things not in their nature unending, and therefore limited by the connection in which they stand, — as the Jewish ritual and priesthood, the possession of the land of Canaan by the chosen people, and other things of a similar nature.

I have thus made a statement in plain and general language, not an argument, of the faith of Unitarian Christians. Many will perhaps differ from it in part; a few may agree with it entirely. Agreeing or disagreeing, may we look at the subject fairly and candidly, and make up our minds as in the sight and fear of God. We are not responsible for others, but for ourselves. "To his own master every man standeth or falleth."

We believe, yet further, that our faith has most powerful auxiliaries to spread it, and eternal foundations to support it, and therefore that it cannot be overthrown, though all the powers and priesthoods on earth should war against it, but that in the end it will leaven Christendom.

For we appeal to the Bible, both the Old and New Testament, against creeds, confessions, traditions, customs, however ancient or authorized by man. We say, "To the law and to the testimony," not in the mere "letter which killeth, but in the spirit which giveth life."

We appeal to conscience, the moral sense in man of right and wrong, the echo of the Divinity; and we are certain that it is the ally of a just theology, of equitable views of God's character and attributes, of accountableness, sin, and punishment.

We appeal to reason, twin-sister of conscience, not as in rivalry of the Scriptures, but in beautiful harmony therewith; and we feel and know, by good experience, that, in the unprejudiced, unsophisticated

common-sense of mankind, our doctrines will gain an immovable hold. We do not hold to reason above revelation, but to revelation interpreted, the only way it can be, by reason.

We appeal to the affections and aspirations of the heart, and we find these to be our allies ; in poetic words, —

“ And exultations and agonies
And love, and man’s unconquerable mind,”

which yearn after a higher state of the soul, a purer condition of society, and the perfect reign on earth, as in heaven, of “ liberty, holiness, love.”

We appeal to the grand principles of Protestantism, to which half the Protestant world have proved false, the Bible as the standard of faith and practice, and the right and duty of private judgment in these high matters, independently of popes and presbyteries, assemblies and alliances.

We appeal to the spirit of our own free institutions and republican government, which proclaim the equality of man with man in his rights and duties, and which is opposed to church governments founded on the monarchical and aristocratic principles of the old countries, — the bishoprics, the councils, the synods, the power of one or a few over the many, — but which gives toleration to every sect and denomination. The great ideas of American freedom are identical with the principles of New England Congregationalism, fairly carried out, and in fact they thence caught that electric spark which has

vivified the world, and made liberty a watchword among the nations.

We appeal, in fine, to the spirit of the age, which is in league, we believe, with a more earnest practical faith, with a more resolute religious spirit, a more sober, real, living, every-day piety and morality, cleared from the mists and speculations and traditions of dark and distant ages, and in harmony with the progress of society, the advance of science, the triumphs of the arts, the spread of popular institutions, the diffusion of useful knowledge, the universal education of the people, and the glorious movements of modern reformation against the hoary vices of the past, — idolatry, ignorance, cruelty, slavery, war, licentiousness, and intemperance. To all these, and to more and mightier allies, to the Father of spirits and to the Saviour of sinners, who ever liveth to make intercession for us, we appeal for the truth of our views, and for their saving power and spread in the world. If they are not the truths of revelation, they will and they ought to go down. But if, as we must solemnly believe, they are in accordance with the teachings of Jesus and his Apostles, they will live, and not die. They will win their way over all obstacles, and gain the heart of the world. The truth is mighty, and it will prevail.

Take courage, therefore, brethren, in your undertaking. Be of good cheer. Be active in these infinite concerns. Be wide awake to your spiritual and eternal interests. Labor, pray, confer together. Kin-

dle up a pure flame of brotherly love and heartfelt devotion in your own hearts, and in the hearts of your fellow-men around. Believe, hope, persevere unto the end, and you cannot fail of great and good results. In due season you shall reap, if you faint not.

To this faith, then, "once delivered to the saints," this faith of the Scriptures, of reason, of conscience, of fervent affections and high aspirations; to this faith of Protestantism, of freedom, and of progress; to one God, the Father, and to his Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour, and to the fellowship of the Holy Spirit of God; to the reading of the sacred volume; to the preaching of Christ, and him crucified; to the songs of praise, and devout meditations, and penitence and prayer; to the observance of the Christian ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and the joys of Christian communion and conference, — we would dedicate these now hallowed courts. We would consecrate the pulpit for the faithful and heart-searching and soul-moving administration of the Divine Word, — the pews for the attentive hearing and devout reflections and resolutions of the worshippers, — the choir for the solemn strains of sacred melody, — the doors for the entrance of successive generations of the young and old, pressing to the altar of God and the feet of Jesus, — the walls to resound with the songs and exhortations of the holy day. Here may the children be welcomed to the Sabbath school, and taught by faithful and affectionate teach-

ers the beautiful precepts and promises of their Saviour. Here may the mourner come and find comfort, the sinner be warned and rescued, and all guided and cheered on in the way everlasting. Here may many souls be born out of the low earthly mind into the high spiritual life, and be prepared to enter into the inheritance of heaven. Here may you become better husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters; better citizens in your town, better patriots to your country, and better philanthropists to your race. And may the outward institutions of religion, generously and faithfully supported by your people, result in inward sanctification and heavenly-mindedness, so that when these walls shall fall into ruins, it may be found that you not only dedicated this temple, built with hands, to the Most High, but that you also dedicated yourselves as the living temples for the residence of his indwelling spirit; so that you shall all at last—not one family broken, not one wanderer lost—enter into that higher sanctuary, eternal in the heavens, and perform that nobler worship, ascribing “blessing and honor and glory and power unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.” Amen.

DISCOURSE V.



THE LETTER AND THE SPIRIT.

NOT OF THE LETTER, BUT OF THE SPIRIT; FOR THE LETTER
KILLETH, BUT THE SPIRIT GIVETH LIFE. — 2 Corinthians iii. 6.

THERE are two methods of interpreting the word of God; — one of the letter, the other of the spirit; one literal and verbal, the other liberal. One makes much of the words or forms in which an idea is conveyed, and insists upon a rigid construction of the language. The other passes within the out-works which surround, or the illustrations which beautify, to grasp the central thought itself, accounting expressions as of little consequence in themselves, and as only valuable for the sense they convey; since it is the gem gives value to the casket, not the casket to the gem. One is chiefly concerned with the grammar and lexicon, and is anxious about the cases of nouns, and the modes and tenses of verbs, while the other aims at the mind of the author, and from that stand-point would read his language and interpret his sentiments. One admits only what is expressly written, the other allows

much room for what is implied or understood, but is not directly expressed. One is fearful of going too far, the other of falling short. One inclines more to the explicit precepts and positive rules ; the other seeks to penetrate the profound depth of truth, and catch its rare, ethereal essence. The method of literal interpretation leads in its extremes, strange as it may appear, to the divergent errors of Catholicism and Calvinism ; while the free construction, allowed too much scope, leaves us only the thin abstractions of Neology and Pantheism, or with its correspondencies and celestial senses mystifies us with the flights of Spiritualism.

If however we must range ourselves on the one or the other side, if we must be either Literalists or Liberals and Spiritualists, we should not hesitate long between the two. For the errors of one class arise from the very principles with which they set out ; the errors of the other arise, not from their principles, but from the perversion and misapplication of their principles. If we must be either of the letter or of the spirit, we should rank ourselves on the side of the spirit, for the reason given in the text ; in other words, because by a rigid, liberal, verbal understanding of the Scriptures their genuine life is destroyed, while by a free, liberal, popular construction, you seize their life-giving spirit, and arrive at the mind of the author.

The importance of the alternative now proposed has never received sufficient attention, either from

learned or unlearned readers of the Bible. It scarcely seems to have been observed, that the undue weight given to the one or the other side of this question has been the grand, prolific source of the errors and absurdities in Christian theology. Hardly any step could be taken more conducive to the cause of both truth and union, than the establishment of just principles of Biblical interpretation, and their steady and consistent application by every class of Christian believers.

The merits of this subject will however be better understood by immediately turning to some well-known cases, where the two methods indicated are brought into use.

In the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John, our Lord says to the Jews, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." He repeats the same language several times in the course of the chapter, as if it were of the greatest consequence.

Proceeding on the verbal method, a large proportion of the Christian Church in all ages has held literally to these words and phrases, and believed that no man could have spiritual life in himself, unless he eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man, or, what is deemed equivalent, partake of the elements of bread and wine, which, after their consecration by the priest, are regarded as the literal flesh and blood of the Saviour! And to carry out in practice this idea to its utmost limits, the cup was

not distributed among the lay communicants of the Church, as we should have naturally inferred from the strict and literal system; but to exhibit a still higher refinement of the theory adopted, it was denied on the ground that, as the flesh contains the blood, so the bread when consecrated imbibed the efficacy of both the flesh and blood of Christ, and it was therefore superfluous to partake of the cup! This and kindred errors in relation to the Lord's Supper infect, not only the Church of Rome, but large portions of the Protestant world, and appear at this moment to be gaining ground.

On the other hand, the liberal interpreters deny that any of the above inferences are to be drawn from our Lord's words in question. No reference is probably made in that chapter to the ordinance afterwards instituted. Jesus had just before fed the five thousand with a miraculous increase of loaves and fishes. This leads to the vivid imagery quoted. He charges the multitude with selfish motives in following him, and exhorts them to labor for "the meat which endureth unto everlasting life." He then calls himself by a strong figure the bread of life, and says they must eat this spiritual bread. Some said it was a hard saying, and many have felt the same since, because they understand the language literally. But our Lord explaineth himself soon after. "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." As much as to say, The

saving, life-giving power of which I speak resides not in my flesh literally, but in my words and spirit. They are instinct with vital energy. How much stronger and nobler an idea is yielded by the free and figurative, than by the literal method! How much more agreeable to "the analogy of faith," to the harmony of truth, to the whole circle of Christ's teaching of which this is one arc, to understand, that he gives us his doctrine, his moral and spiritual life, to feed our life, than that he imparts his flesh and blood in any literal or material sense whatsoever!

Many are ready to say, that, if you do not adopt the most literal signification of a passage of Scripture, you explain it away. But the charge is wholly misplaced, the fact is directly the reverse. You explain away the sense of any book, when you rest on its apparent, verbal import, instead of descending into its interior idea. Because we assert that this or that text of Scripture is figurative, we by no means say that it means little, or means nothing, but, on the contrary, that it is all the more full of thought and life on that very account. For the very fact, that there is something more than a bare statement of truth in a commonplace way, attests to the warm and aroused mind of the speaker or writer, which could not be satisfied with tame and prosaic words, but indulged in the most natural way in signs, pictures, figures, as embodiments of thought, and struck off from the glowing anvil of meditation a thousand brilliant sparks in every direction.

The Jews took Jesus literally when he said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up"; and they said, "Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?" But he spoke of the temple of his body. They explained away the sublime idea of the resurrection from the dead, and substituted in its place the literal, limited conception of prostrating the marble and the mortar of the edifice, and raising it up again to its former estate. So it is uniformly. The verbal sense is always the least sense, the feeblest, most frigid thought; the spiritual sense, the most living and profound. The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

Incalculable injury has been done to the Bible by wresting its free and popular language, its graceful, figurative phrases, to suit a rigid, stiff literalness. Such treatment would have been the ruin of any other work, less potent than the oracles of divine truth. They have survived the perversion only because the light that is in them cannot be wholly put out, though all the clouds and mists of human tradition and false philosophy gather about them, for they shine with an independent and inextinguishable radiance of their own.

In short, the same disposition which the ancient Jews so often manifested in torturing the words of Christ to express a different sense from what he designed, has largely infected the Christian world in all periods. When he spoke of his kingdom, the king-

dom of God, the kingdom of heaven, he simply meant the order and reign of his religion ; but their minds caught fire at the prospect of an actual earthly sovereignty. So, at the present time, nothing will satisfy some persons but the personal advent of our Lord bodily, to sway his sceptre over his dependent subjects. It is not enough for them that his religion is enthroning itself above principalities and powers, ascending a loftier throne than that of the Cæsars, and subjecting kingdom after kingdom and continent after continent to his laws. They are not content that he is beginning to reign as the Prince of Peace, the Deliverer of the captive, and the universal Saviour of the world. They slight the tokens of his coming in the selfish and warlike passions being softened, and in the growth of a true self-respect, social order, civil and religious liberty, general education, Christian morals, and the reformations of this age. But they are haunted with the pageantry of a throne, a sceptre, attendants, ministers, and all the coarse accompaniments of royalty. Like some of old, they would take Jesus and make him king. But by giving a spiritual construction to the words of our Saviour, we yield them the highest sense, the truest dignity. For the outward reign of the best sovereign is but little ; while the inward subjection of the whole man to Jesus, the bringing of all the forces of the intellectual and moral world into his obedience and consequent freedom, is the only real glory, either to the spiritual ruler or to his spiritual followers.

Another instance, among the many which might be mentioned, in which the teachings of Christ were obscured by an adherence to the letter, was when he spoke of his connection with his Father. Because he said he was the Son of God, they accused him of making himself equal with God ; a position which he never claimed. But by their literal understanding of his words, they narrowed and degraded his idea. In the same sense he said, "I and my Father are one." It is not explaining away this remarkable phrase to say, that not oneness of person, identity of consciousness, is meant, but unison of affection, purpose, and interest. This is to give it the true and spiritual sense. The oneness of Jesus with God in a moral sense, as filled with his love, reflecting his attributes, obedient to his will, and engaged in his highest service, is a far greater and more inspiring idea than bare identity of being. The one is poor and cold, because it is of the letter ; the other is profound and sanctifying, because it is of the spirit, and therefore giveth life.

One of the greatest mischiefs which creeds and textual, verbal controversy have inflicted is, that they have attracted attention to the letter of Scripture, and so far have thrown its spirit into obscurity. They have exercised the skill of the grammarian more than the temper of the saint. They have sent the Christian student to his lexicon oftener than to his prayers. They have turned the simplicity of Scripture into the jargon of metaphysics. Are we

to believe, and believe only what is in a creed, composed by fallible men in imperfect language? Shall we go whither it goes, and stop where it stops? What, Christianity shut up in a creed, imprisoned in the Assembly's Catechism, the Presbyterian Confession, or the Thirty-Nine Articles! — then might the sea be poured into a nutshell. Christianity is shut up in no form of words, for it is greater than all words. It is a spirit, and like its embodiment Christ, like its author God, no expressions can perfectly describe, as no thought can fully comprehend it. The language of the New Testament is the sign, symbol, manifestation of this spirit, — a true, beautiful, forcible manifestation; but the spirit itself still soars far above and beyond, pure as heaven, blest as Jesus, infinite as God. After this spirit we ought to aspire, and not yield adherence to the dead letter, and cling to literal words.

An analogous case will illustrate this view more fully. I go forth to witness the fair creation at this refulgent season of the year, when heaven seems to have descended to sojourn for a time upon the earth. I walk amidst endless signs of beauty and order and wisdom and power and goodness. The pure blue sky, as it softly meets my eye, the fresh breeze, as it fans my brow, and the harmony of every grove, convey to the soul an indescribable sense of the reality and presence of God. I care not to dwell on any single leaf, or cloud, or sunbeam, to learn that God is great and good. All nature declares it with one voice. All is

grand, all is fair, all is wise. The same master-idea is expressed by each individual star and tree and flower. But I will not scan too curiously these single letters of the mighty alphabet, the infinite language of the Almighty ; let me rise to the spirit of the whole, to Him who is greater than his works. Thus only shall I receive the truest and most inspiring idea of the Infinite and Ever-Blessed One. When I see a fine landscape, when I behold the worlds of fire and glory that roll and shine above us, I feel myself in the presence of One who could make a yet fairer world, yet more glorious and stupendous exhibitions of his unbounded perfections ; of One who has not exhausted himself, but rejoices in making ever new revelations of himself in the boundless fields of the universe.

In a similar spirit ought we to commune with the word of God and with the Gospel of Christ ; not cling to the words with a schoolboy literalness, but seek to enter into the life-giving spirit. This or that text, or all texts, cannot fully describe the sum total of Christianity. Here are signs, symbols, pointing to it, and partially representing it, as the sun, moon, flowers, mountains, partially exhibit God ; but we must not stick in these, and lose the living energy of the whole. The Gospel is taught us by a life, a death, a resurrection, an ascension. These facts convey what no mere description could embody, a weight and world of meaning, which no progress can exhaust, no discoveries supersede. And if we

would devote more time to imbibing the large, generous, deep-toned spirit of our religion, to receiving and freshening in our hearts its glorious principles and ideas, and less attention were given to the letter and external doctrines, our progress would be far more satisfactory. For men become disciples of the Saviour, not by following set rules, but by drinking in his spirit, the spirit of all holiness and goodness. Not that the distinctive precepts and positive commands of the Master are not to be most faithfully followed; but they are to be obeyed in the spirit, their sense to be perceived, their relations and effects to be understood, and their tone of feeling to be cherished; and then obedience will not be of constraint, but willingly, virtue will not be a mechanical propriety, but the inmost perfection of the character. And nothing can ever help society to outgrow the narrowness and exclusiveness of the systems of theology generally received, but the reception of the great central principles of the Gospel; love to God, love to man, the worth of the soul, the accountability of the individual, the sublimity of human destiny, and the certainty of retribution. In the presence and under the action of these eternal truths, these magnificent sentiments, all littleness and bigotry stand abashed, and hasten to hide themselves in that night to which they belong.

While, then, we would say with the prophet, "To the law and to the testimony," we would also add, "To its life-giving spirit, not to its dead letter."

The Gospel of Christ is a new moral creation. It is a universe of truth. Its great ideas never can be exhausted, nor its perfect laws displaced. But so far as we insist on single words, texts, — the tokens and emblems of these laws and ideas, — to the exclusion of the general import, we shut ourselves out of this glorious creation, we blind our eyes to this beautiful universe, and creep into a dark corner. But the pure resolve, the earnest prayer, the breathing of the heart after light and rest and God, will take us out into its invigorating air and sunshine and divine beauty. If we choose to be contracted and illiberal, it is easy to be so, though all the while we date from the Church of God, and register our names among the followers of the Lamb. But if we would be growing Christians, either personally or as a Church ; if we would enjoy religion, and find its yoke easy and its burden light, we must pierce through the shell to the kernel, and enter more into the spirit of our faith, and rise to ever new and holier views of life and duty. Though prisoners in the flesh, we are prisoners of hope, and may bathe our souls in the heaven of light and love. In saying this, no recommendation is given to vagueness or mysticism. An habitual state of sentimental reverie enfeebles every virtue, and prostrates all manliness of character. A spurious spiritualism is one of the follies of the day, though far from being native to the New England mind. But what is most earnestly advised is the spiritual study of religion and its records in preference to its

doctrinal, or textual, or verbal study. Not that one may not be good, but the other is far better. For while one may give us an accurate creed, though it can hardly do that, the other inspires a divine life. The one may save us from absurdity, though it has not always accomplished even that end, but the other rescues us from sin. The one may make us good theologians, though it has made many poor ones, but the other constitutes us heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

Religion is a history, an institution, and a doctrine, but eminently and always it is a spirit. The law of the spirit of life, or, to drop the Hebrew idiom, the law of the living spirit in Christ Jesus, hath made me free, said Paul, from the law of sin and death. Would that all men might forthwith enter into that living spirit! Shall we be ever learning, and never come to the experimental knowledge of the truth? Shall we always remain among the first rudiments, among the beggarly elements? Let us be satisfied with no dead-letter profession, or understanding, or practice of religion. If it is anything, it is a thing of spirit, life, reality, progress. If it is anything, it is everything, the very breath of our being.

If the Christian teacher can have one desire higher and purer than any other, as the heavens are higher than the earth, it is that his flock may be spiritually-minded Christians; not that they bear this name or

that, — how poor will sectarian titles look in the light of the eternal throne ! how discordant will the watch-words of party sound in the seraphic choir ! — but that they may be living men in Christ Jesus. To start one soul in the endless progress and bliss of a divine and spiritual life were doing more than to cast a thousand minds in the mould of a human creed, or make them feeble imitators of some great leader. Brethren, our hearts' desire and prayer is, that you may be Christians in all the vast and unfathomed meaning of that word ; that you may have the spirit of Christ, without which you are none of his. And what is "the fruit of that spirit, but love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance ? Against such there is no law."



DISCOURSE VI.



THE CONQUEST OF EVIL.*

BE NOT OVERCOME OF EVIL, BUT OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD.—
Romans xii. 21.

THE nature and office of Philosophy are quite distinct from the nature and office of the Gospel. Philosophy cannot take the place of Religion, nor Religion that of Philosophy; for one is the highest wisdom of man, but the other is the perfect wisdom of God. The philosopher speculates, suggests; the prophet declares, commands. The philosopher speaks from the largest human reason, and his words are great and good; the prophet speaks from the larger reason and higher inspiration of the Divinity,—not at war with the purest conclusions of reason, but beyond and above them, as heaven is above the earth. Great in history are the names of Plato and Confucius, but those of Moses and Christ are not only greater, but of a different order of greatness, so that

* A Discourse preached at the Installation of Rev. John Jay Putnam as Pastor of the First Congregational Church and Society in Bolton, Massachusetts, September 26, 1849.

it is not reverential to place them in juxtaposition, except by way of contrast. And Philosophy has showed at once her true character and merit, when, after achieving her noblest triumphs by her Bacon, her Lockes, and her Newtons, she has come and seated herself humbly and modestly at the feet of Him, the Teacher come from God, who "taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes."

But Philosophy, though utterly incapable, as experience and history demonstrate, of standing in the holy sanctuary and teaching sinful man the way to God, performs a most valuable service as a hand-maiden to Christianity. Philosophy has a necessary work in applying religion to human nature, life, and society. Like the dense atmosphere of the earth, it can well reflect and refract the pure light of heaven, and make it useful to man. Or, to change the illustration, though, like the sun-glass, it has no intrinsic light and heat of its own, sufficient to enlighten and warm the world, yet, like that humble instrument, it can cause the diffused beams of the sun to converge to a focus, and light a fire which its scattered rays never could have kindled. In other words, human wisdom is needed in converting to the best ends the Divine wisdom. A philosophical knowledge of history, and especially of the history of the Church, of human nature in its strong and its weak points, of society as now existing and working, is an important part of the mental furniture of the Christian teacher. He can neither add to nor take from the pure truths

of the Gospel, as they shine on the pages of the Apostles and Evangelists, but a true philosophy will make him far more expert and efficient in reducing them to practice, in bringing them within the circle of man's appreciation, and in urging them home as living realities on the conscience and the heart. In a word, the Christian minister should be a philosopher; not that he may teach philosophy, but that he may truly and effectually teach Christianity. For "we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

The Apostle in the text has stated an important law of spiritual progress, the philosophical method of individual and social regeneration. He has here generalized and announced the Christian mode of spiritually dealing with ourselves and with mankind. It is, in few words, the process of changing the heart, and through the heart changing the life by what has been called "the expulsive power of a new affection." By this law of our moral constitution, that "which is in part can be done away only when that which is perfect comes." Positive good, accordingly, is the match for evil, light the agency to disperse darkness, truth the power to overcome error, the perfect Gospel the divine instrument to redeem imperfect and erring man. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

If this philosophy of mental and moral influence had been better understood and carried into effect,

the truth would have been spared many defeats, and the disciples of Christ many discouragements. For they have in past times often sought to promote Christianity in unphilosophical and unnatural ways, and, of course, have been disappointed. They have not paid that attention to the elements and powers with which they have had to do, that the chemist, the mechanic, the naturalist, have been obliged to give, if they would, win success in their several spheres of action. But the operation of the moral laws, if not as prompt, is as stringent and inevitable as that of the material, and no zeal, no energy, no devotion, can make amends for a defective process. "Nature," as the poet said, "cannot be driven out with a pitchfork," and the illustration applies to the world of mind as much as to the world of matter. It is, therefore, of prime consequence that we not only have, what we believe we have, the perfect and heaven-appointed instrument in the Gospel of Christ for the salvation of the world, but that we use, apply, adapt that instrument to human nature and society, according to its own spirit and intent, and according to a sound philosophy of human nature and the human condition.

Thus, for example, one of the unphilosophical methods of past ages has been *persecution*. Pains and penalties have been made the remedy for error. Torture has been used for conviction and persuasion. Christianity, as well as Mahometanism, has been promulgated by the sword at certain periods. Car-

nal weapons have been employed to do a spiritual work.

Another unphilosophical mode of operating on men for a religious end has been by *terror*. All the fears which man has been capable of feeling, have been appealed to, and made the grand instrument of conversion. Fear is doubtless a proper motive in its place, but its place is a low one. To bring it into prominent or exclusive use is as absurd as to use but one kind of food, clothing, or medicine. Fear-made Christians will always betray the error of their spiritual birth, in a certain dwarfed and warped character. Terror has been the potent spirit of the revival system, and certain tracts of the country over which it has passed have been designated by a fearful, but descriptive term, as "*the burnt districts*." The verdure of nature has perished, and even the fire itself cannot be kindled there again.

Denunciation is still another mode, which, if exclusively adopted, ruins the cause it would promote. To call certain sects of Christians by hard names, to array against them the prejudices of the community, to torture all they do and say, by a perverse ingenuity, into something sinful or criminal, to spend and be spent, not in seeing how good we can make ourselves, but how bad we can prove our neighbors to be, is surely very wide of the aim proposed by the Apostle Paul in the text. One of the chief privileges, perhaps, of our country and our age is, that in some measure they have lifted off this immense power of

persecution by denunciation, and given men hardihood and room to think their own free thoughts and speak their own free words on religious subjects. There is some practical freedom here and now, while in most countries and ages it has had but a speculative existence.

Again, *artifice and deception* have been but too often, and still are, the modes applied to spread the holy Gospel. "Pious frauds" have been committed; "Do evil, that good may come," has been a maxim but too faithfully followed in some quarters. Political intrigues, and, where they failed, force of arms, have recently been the instrument of upholding the Papal throne; — darkest, saddest, most wicked of all the deeds of a wicked generation!

I might proceed in this enumeration of the unphilosophical and unchristian methods, current in Christendom, of promoting the Gospel, but enough has been said to give a general idea of them. Against such agencies and means the text and the spirit of the whole New Testament, I scarcely need say, enter their remonstrance. For the rule laid down by the Apostle virtually excludes all other rules, or makes them entirely subordinate. It proposes, as the best and highest method of overcoming evil, to do it by the counter victorious influence of good.

It is evident that the means used ought to be in harmony with the end proposed. To promote a bad cause by bad methods is what we might reasonably expect; but to seek the promotion of truth by means

of error, of good by means of evil, is utterly inconsistent. But more than this, it is in the long run utterly impracticable. However apparently successful for a season worldly agencies may be in advancing the cause of God, yet in the end they are signally defeated. The laws of Providence cannot be cheated. False weights and measures will not long avail anywhere. Truth, love, righteousness, holiness, must be the leading characteristics of all the modes of influence by which we propose to spread truth, love, righteousness, and holiness. In all things like begets like.

I. We may apply this *rationale* of procedure to *Theology*. In the language of one of our wise men, lately expressed, "it is only by religious truth that religious errors, with all their attendant evils, can be done away." The main difficulty in most controversies in the Christian Church has been, that they are mere clashings together of two systems of error, not the grapplings of truth with error. If Luther attempted to root out transubstantiation, it was by the equal absurdity of consubstantiation. If the Protestants in general strove zealously against the Papacy, they contended at the same time as ardently for infallible creeds of their own, and persecuted all doubters as heretics. If the Church of England disowned the validity of the first ordinance of the Gospel as consisting in the amount of water employed in its administration, yet she ran into the error still worse, if possible, of baptismal regeneration. If the

extreme of the eternity of hell-torments, in the Calvinistic sense, has called forth an answer, it has too often been that of immediate, unconditional, and universal salvation. So on the battle-field of Theology has error fought with error, and dogma warred against dogma.

Here the philosophical mode of the Apostle Paul proffers itself. It is not to knock down errors, so much as to set up truths. It is not to disprove the negative, but to present the affirmative. It is to preach positively, rather than controversially ; not to contend against the darkness, but to "light a candle, and put it on a candlestick, that it may give light unto all that are in the house." I am far from saying that noxious errors are not to be vigorously attacked occasionally, and their true character revealed, but it is to be done in perfect charity. In the mean time, the prevailing and all-absorbing work of the Christian theologian is to proclaim and press home the truth, — plain, positive, Gospel truth. The warfare of the sects cannot be pacified, as long as they pursue their present methods of operation. For if existing difficulties were all settled, with their belligerent spirit and disposition to fight down error, rather than to show up the truth, a new class of questions would soon arise, a new set of dragon's teeth, according to the fable, be sown, and a new crop of armed men spring up.

The vast systems of error embraced in the theology of Rome, of Oxford, and of Geneva, consolidated

through many generations, intertwined with civil institutions and social customs, half sanctified by the memory of the many good men who have been so because they were more Christians than Catholics, Episcopalians, or Calvinists, widely diffused in literature, deeply tincturing education, and wrought into every portion of modern society, cannot fall at once, nor in our wise moments shall we ask it or wish it. Better an erroneous and superstitious faith, than an inundation of scepticism. But the safe and eventual remedy for these imperfect religions, as for the imperfect scientific or political systems of past times, which try to outlive their day, is in the truth. That is mighty, and it will prevail. Thus alchemy, astrology, are done away, beyond recall, when chemistry, when astronomy, come. Thus feudal institutions depart before the power of new ideas, or undergo important modifications. In this view, our chief anxiety should not be success, but that we may have the pure truth, that we may drink in the spirit of a boundless charity; for against the truth, spoken in love, nothing of error, however petrified in forms and customs, however hallowed by antiquity, or buttressed up by authority, can finally maintain its ground.

We feel assured that, as Liberal Christians, we have a Christian theology, an interpretation of the Gospel which escapes most of the errors, and embodies most of the truths, which are to be found in the superannuated bodies of divinity. The doctrines of

God, the Father; Christ, the Saviour; and Man, the brother; of life, as a school to learn in, and not a prison, to suffer in; sin, as a fearful, but not an infinite, and not necessarily an eternal, evil; of forgiveness, as consequent on repentance and amendment, not on the sacrifice of the innocent for the guilty; of the sufficiency of Him to save whom God has appointed to save, though he be less than God, and more than man; of faith as rational, not less than Scriptural; of character as determining our condition hereafter; of a righteous award, and justice administered with mercy, and the spirit shining more and more unto the perfect and eternal day,—these doctrines, and others kindred to them, we are convinced, are true, and will win their way. We claim not infallibility, but appeal to revelation interpreted by reason in the light of faith. And for a true revival of religion, not a transient emotion, but a deep life-sentiment, we feel bound on all proper occasions to preach, teach, and enforce these doctrines. They are full of light and love, and wherever spread, the theological night will flee before them, as the darkness before the morning aurora. As we welcome another laborer to the Master's service, we trust that he will be the diligent student of this nobler Christian theology, that he may be a powerful and persuasive preacher of righteousness. If you would satisfy man's thirst, or purge away the errors and evils that infest the human soul, draw, my brother, draw from the deep fountain of the Gospel the waters of everlasting life.

II. This scientific mode is also applicable to *Spiritual Culture*, whether in the young or the old.

In education, the true way to prevent evil is to fill the mind with good; to overcome bad passions, is to call into exercise good ones. Even in the worst, there still remain certain indestructible moral elements, like the beautiful figures in the glass paper-weights, buried deep in the very substance, which can only be destroyed by annihilating the whole handiwork in which they are inserted. And where better principles have fallen into disuse, the duty is plain to revive their activity, and to restore the lost balance of the moral constitution. We have done little or no good to a child when we have brought one set of selfish motives to overbear another set of the same kind, and by the mere fear of punishment, hope of reward, or desire to excel others, have sought to conquer sloth, reluctance to study or work, and sensual dispositions. The human mind has many strings, and these are but a few of the lowest and coarsest, necessary and harmonious in their place, but not to be exclusively or chiefly struck. Let the teacher fearlessly touch the higher chords of duty, love, gratitude, sympathy, aspiration, and a response will be given, faint it may be at first, but rising and swelling at last into strains sweet and pure as the songs of angels.

In the work of personal, experimental religion, also, we often meet with difficulties and discouragements because we adopt a false and unphilosophical

mode of self-discipline. The end is plain before us. It is moral power, spiritual refinement, increasing heavenly-mindedness. But how to raise these faltering, backsliding characters of ours to such heights of Christian excellence, and maintain our position in the pure ether, when earth and its powerful attractions are drawing us down to its gross interests, and its dead level of conformity, is the difficult problem. The Apostle has given us precept and philosophy in few words. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." This is the solution of the problem. We can do away the evils of our characters, and the sins of our conduct, by the presence and influence of better motives and feelings, by the regenerating energy of a higher class of motives. We cannot cast out Satan by Satan, or command the devils to depart in any other name than that of the great exorcist, Jesus of Nazareth. The Holy Spirit is the only adequate sanctifier.

It is in this connection we see the mistake, so graphically portrayed by the Saviour, of the man in the Gospel. When the unclean spirit left him, he simply swept and garnished its habitation, and made ready for the accommodation of seven other spirits worse than the first, instead of filling his apartments so full of good spirits that the bad ones would find no welcome, and no room to abide in. The human mind cannot remain unoccupied. A vacuum cannot be created in the moral, any more than in the material world. Every mental space, so to say, will be

full of something; the only question is, whether that something shall be good or bad. Objection is sometimes made to giving children a religious faith, because we shall sow their young natures with prejudices and biases. But they cannot be kept neutral and passive, and we must decide whether it is better that they should contract the haphazard biases and prejudices of society, or the faith and opinions of their parents and teachers. Every mind will have its leading thought, and every heart its determining affection. If the true God be not worshipped and loved, then some idol will desecrate the inner sanctuary of the soul. The question of salvation is not whether the soul shall act, or remain inert, for act it will by the force of a natural, instinctive law; but it is whether it shall act downward or upward, whether it shall assimilate itself to the earthly or to the heavenly, whether it shall pour all its energies into the channel of worldly interests, or raise them to spiritual duties, objects, and realities. God or Mammon is the alternative. The only way *not* to serve the false divinity is earnestly to serve the true one. The proper method, accordingly, either to begin or to prosecute the Christian course, is to put forth positive and earnest efforts to rise, rather than endeavors not to fall.

Religion is most effective when it passes from a law of restraint into an impulse to good, a predominant motive, an informing and quickening life of the soul. Then it is not the negation of evil, but the

presence and possession of good ; not the mere irksome conformity to a precept, but the happy growth of the spiritual constitution towards perfection.

It will be your duty, and I know, my brother, it will be your happiness, to preach, not only a Christian theology, but a practical, working, improving faith, as its chief worthy conclusion. The exhortation will be ever sounding forth from this pulpit, “ ‘ Friend, go up higher ’ ; forget the things behind ; press onward to those before ; let no day pass without its step forward, without some grace or excellence of character brightened, some error or sin weakened, some victory won over envy, or ill-temper, or negligence, or pride, or selfishness, or hate, or lust, or some of the other evil spirits that beset us.” For to live is not to eat, sleep, work, move, breathe, but to think, feel, choose, love, and act according to the everlasting laws of the spiritual world. Hence that must be regarded as a lost day, when we have not done something to change the dull, leaden image of the earthy into the beauty and glory of the heavenly.

III. The remaining field of duty in which the law of influence laid down by the Apostle is to be employed, is that of *Philanthropy*. Prohibition is good in its place. “ Thou shalt not steal,” “ Thou shalt not kill,” form a part of that system, which Jesus came not to destroy, but to fulfil. But the law, fearfully enforced and sanctioned, was weak through the flesh. Temporal motives, the penalties of this world, were insufficient. To reform men of

their vices, and keep them reformed, requires the most persuasive and controlling influences of which the human heart is susceptible. The faith of Christ, opening the wonders, glories, and terrors of the spiritual world, pointing up to a Supreme Judge and forward to a day of retribution, disclosing the infinite love of God for his children on the earth, has supplied these motives.

It is therefore less by fierce attacks on existing evils, though for that work too there is sometimes an imperative call, than by a comprehensive development of the truth as it is in Jesus, and its strenuous application to the whole broad field of moral reformation, that we may hope to do lasting good to mankind. We need a fresh expansion of Christian truth and love, more than philippics against any sins or any sinners. Jesus and his Apostles denounced the vices of men, but they devoted the greater part of their time and teaching to effecting those radical changes in the motives and principles of human action by which an entire reformation would in due time be accomplished in the institutions and customs of men. Ideas govern the world. The discovery of a few new principles of an elemental nature has created chemistry, astronomy, optics, geology. A fresh application of truth changes the modes of travelling, mechanism, business. Take now the Christian ideas, let them become real ideas to men, not the ghosts and forms of ideas, and they would transform the earth, they would beautify humanity,

so that there would be as great a distance between the men of the genuine Christian era of piety and human brotherhood and the men of our own time, as there is between a refined New England village and the barbarian hamlets of our British ancestors in the days of the Druids. There is power enough, latent power, in the Gospel, to change the whole aspect of society, and to bring out those lovelier, gentler, purer, godlike traits, which should reflect in some degree the image, faint though fair, of the Divine loveliness, beauty, purity, and beneficence.

But the world is now demonized, possessed by seven or more evil spirits. They rend and tear it. They create poverty and suffering and death beyond computation. They make Ishmaelites of the human fraternity, and set every man's hand against his brother. But we cannot attack these evils, as Hercules is fabled to have done the Lernean Hydra, crushing his heads, and burning the prolific wounds with a red-hot iron. A strong moral indignation has its proper periods and places, but abuse is not a moral instrument of any great efficacy. We cannot bury evils in the dust, nor rend them away suddenly and violently from the social fabric. Diligently and constantly we must multiply the good, and that and that alone of all the weapons in the universe can at last overcome the evil. We want in our Christian philanthropists a living specimen of what they would make all men; — we look in them for firmness, but not obstinacy; zeal, but not fanaticism; courage,

but not recklessness ; honest dealing, but not outrage ; prompt decision, but not angry impatience. Let us learn a more generous and kindly tone of Christian manners, speaking peaceably for the cause of Peace, temperately for the cause of Temperance, freely for the cause of Freedom, purely for the cause of Purity, justly for the cause of Justice, and humanely for the cause of Humanity. God's work should be done in God's spirit. Only when deeply imbued with the temper of Christ, shall we be qualified to act wisely and permanently in the cause of man's reformation. If we hope to do away with that which is in part, the partial, fragmentary, and imperfect in manners, customs, and institutions, it must be by hastening the coming of that which is perfect.

By increasing what is good, the evil is overborne and excluded. Sins cannot be amputated ; they must be outgrown. Vicious institutions can only be reformed, that is, formed again, not wholly superseded. They must be worn away, rather than cut off. Time and patience are needed even in the ripening of the annual fruits of the earth,—how much more in the great harvest of the world and of ages, and the maturing of the spirit! — “first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.” In this work much has been done, the world has grown better, and will continue to grow better, if men will adopt the true and Christian philosophy on the subject. Nor need we fear any general and fatal relapse. As in science we can never return to the beggarly ele-

ments of the dawn of knowledge, so in religion we have seen a progress from age to age, and one practical error and evil after another has been outgrown. Let us not suppose that there is any other or possible course than that onward and upward. Every evil practice or institution is based on some evil opinion or notion, and when we proclaim the new idea, applicable to that case, we overthrow the antagonist evil for ever.

As yet we have too little faith in God, and Christ, and man. To move us powerfully for the promotion of good ends, we must have deep and living springs of truth and love and zeal in our own hearts. We are not enough aware that, if great are our hinderances, great also are our helps, and that, if we are true to ourselves and to God in the work of moral reformation, all things else will be true to us, and will, as by a species of omnipotence, work together with us for good. But common sense, practical wisdom, a Christian philosophy, are needed to direct and make useful the efforts of the most devoted and spiritually-minded laborers in this sphere. Man is essentially an active being. He will be occupied, interested, about something. And if we call him home from the camp, we must set him at some work that will at once occupy and ennoble him, and enlist his affections, and make him feel that his laurels, won by a fierce animal courage, are but worthless weeds, compared with the greater glories and honors of peace. If, too, we win the inebriate from his cups, we must

provide innocent recreations, and healthful occupations and excitements, and cheerful happiness, that shall in time make him loathe the coarse revelries of excess. If, in short, we take men out of any lower and earthly condition by our reforms, we cannot leave them in a vacuum; we must furnish them with new objects of activity, and happiness far exceeding the old, and summon them with a trumpet voice to the blessed life and love of the children of God.

When we have said, therefore, "Overcome evil with good," we have proposed a rational and philosophical mode of Theology, Education, Religious Culture, and Philanthropy of the most valuable kind: one of those general laws laid down by the Apostle, which, like the principle of gravitation or the discovery of electricity in the natural world, simplifies a thousand particulars and details.

And, my brother beloved, this law of action is worthy to be considered by you in your entrance again upon the settled ministry. I am happy to believe that it has been already in other fields of labor a principle of conduct and influence in your labors for the cause of Christ and salvation of men. And with yourself and your people here, may it be a sacred aim, not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good. It is a rule of general use and worthy of all acceptance.

We, both as ministers and people, are to aim for the positive truth, do the good deed, do the best, bring in the perfect, and then the negative, the evil,

the imperfect, will — how could it be otherwise? — be done away beyond all power of reaction or recall. Rise to noble and comprehensive views of Christian truth, let the light of heaven shine into the soul, and the darkness of error and sin will flee away. The Gospel saves the world, not mainly because it pronounces condemnation on its iniquities, but chiefly because it fills it with new life and love, and thus extinguishes at once the power and inclination to sin. We cannot fight down the darkness either in ourselves or other men. We cannot light any torches of our own, that will scatter the dominion of moral night and illumine the world. But we can open our eyes to the light of heaven, we can welcome the revelation from God through Christ, we can fill our souls, and help to fill the souls of others, with the godlike sentiments of Faith, Hope, and Love; and then shall we become children of the day, — a short and not unhappy day on earth, — a calm, and joyous, and everlasting day in heaven.

DISCOURSE VII.



THE PROMISE.*

TRAIN UP A CHILD IN THE WAY HE SHOULD GO ; AND WHEN HE IS OLD, HE WILL NOT DEPART FROM IT. — Proverbs xxii. 6.

ALL great truths commonly lie dormant some ages after they are discovered or revealed. Tardily, though surely, the unstable mind of man is brought to take its true direction, as the shaken needle slowly comes to rest on its great magnet. Hundreds of years pass by, and the truth is still unapplied and rusted. Men walk careless over it, as over an undiscovered mine of diamonds. Straightway a reformer is born, not always a genius, and frequently from some by-corner of the earth ; but the veil is taken from both his eye and his heart, and he is able to see and to feel. Little by little the solemn melody of Truth breaks upon his ear and transports his soul. Alive himself with the life of truth, he makes others live. He touches a chord which vibrates

* A Discourse delivered before the Cheshire Sunday School Association.

throughout the universal bosom. Seizing upon a great principle of nature, he electrifies, he galvanizes, he magnetizes his race. The truth once recovered no more dies, nor is buried. The reformer bequeathes his work and his inspiring example to countless heirs, and they to theirs, till

“Millions of souls shall feel their power,
And bear them down to millions more.”

Thus the rays from one majestic luminary shoot from peak to peak of the mountain-tops, until they finally descend into all the humble vales and most secluded dwellings, and it is day. As illustrations of this delay in the application of great laws to the uses of man, remember the distance between Copernicus and Newton, between the Marquis of Waterford and Fulton. And in things spiritual, how long, how tediously long, were it not the dread and glorious march of Providence, between the declaration of the text and the announcements of Jesus, on one hand, and the Borromeos, and Hannah Mores, and Robert Raikeses on the other! For ages the religious teacher has been wasting his good seed on the beaten highway, — the flinty hearts of grown-up sinners; to-day he sows in rich and mellow furrows, — in the genial natures of children. The mind of the world understands at last, the heart of the world feels, the hands of the world carry into execution, this castaway and neglected truth of the royal sage, — “Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

Our generation has been called unspiritual. We have been warned that we were running into mechanism and materialism. Nor has there been wanting some color of reason to the charge. There has been such a din respecting the mere shell of life,— what shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed, and how shall we faster travel? — that it has caused a shudder lest the divine life of the soul was going to be lost sight of, or extinguished. But it would be a craven spirit that would despond, or despair. If there is not health, there are its symptoms; and we have the attendance of the Great Physician. If there has been an unexampled devotion to man's present and perishable interests, the fruits of the spirit have not been altogether wanting. There have been Arkwrights and Fultons, but also Oberlins and Tuckermans.

Not the least of the good auspices of the coming age is the Sunday school. It took its origin from the recognition of long-buried truth,— the capacity and the need of man to be religiously educated from the cradle upwards. Its bare existence is a fact prophetic of a glorious spiritual prosperity, for it marks the acknowledgment and partial carrying out of the fundamental rudiments of religion, that man has a religious nature from the beginning, that it demands culture, and that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the divinely appointed instrument. Now commences a reformation worthy the name, deep down in man's

soul; not a doffing of one set of creeds or ceremonies to put on another, — Pope Calvin for Pope Peter, — but a regeneration of the human spirit, a flinging away of the last shred of tyranny, the emancipation of ecclesiastical slaves, and their introduction into that “liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.” The truth has long had a free course, now it runs, and anon it will be glorified.

After a great invention or discovery, we think it strange that nobody ever alighted upon it before, so simple afterwards it seems. The ancient Roman almost invented the art of printing, — why did he not take the last important step? Thousands had seen apples fall before Newton; how wonderful, that they never made *his* inference from the fact! So in regard to the Sunday school. Wonderful it is, that so simple a project, so plain a duty, as that of educating the young systematically in the Gospel, should have been the last thing thought of in the world! Robert Raikes himself, in a letter to a friend, describing the origin of his illustrious plan, modestly remarks: “The same sentiments would have arisen in your mind, had they happened to have been called forth as they were suggested to me.”

Truly the need of the institution was urgent; we wonder that necessity was not sooner the mother of invention. Here were millions of parents, sleeping over their solemn trust. Here was the great stream of spiritual being, direct from God’s throne, allowed to flow into filthy sewers and wasting channels.

Here was stainless childhood, its fresh-gushing love uncongealed by the wintry world, its hopes blooming like Eden before the fall; here was generous, elastic, credulous youth,—exposed without any shield to snares without and treachery within. Practised wickedness was industriously distilling poison into their believing ears and tender hearts. Here were young immortals — their souls made for religion, the abiding interests of their whole being, from the first gasp of infancy for ever, religious interests — who grew up without God, who never approached the Great Friend of children at his sweet and gentle invitation. Their beautiful affections, ever rising up and imploring sympathy, are coldly repulsed and driven back into the timid bosom, to pine alone. The ten thousand doubts and questions, and fears and hopes, which swell the sighing heart nigh to bursting, and many a time fill the young eye with tears,—these thronging, pressing inquiries, which threaten to bend down and break the tender, overburdened stalk of youth with the dark enigmas of its existence, must go unanswered, and prey upon the solitary breast. It was (alas! it *is*) a sorrowful sight, yet how common, to behold a beautiful young creature, fresh from a Father of love, straying on at its own wild will, chasing the butterflies of its own fancy, now visited with thrills of ecstasy and now with awful fears, but still wandering on amidst the pitfalls and precipices of life, unguided and unguarded. Soon the storm and the night may come

on, and its home be lost for ever. It is a melting story, that of the babes left in the woods by him who should have been their protector. But ought it to be less affecting to see many children spiritually deserted in the devious moral wilderness of life, with no hand to lead them out of its dark mazes, with no arm to defend them from the wild beasts prowling therein?

Out of this need arose the Sunday school: out of this need, more clearly seen and felt, is to arise its improvement and growing efficiency. We were living not long ago in the skirts of the Dark Ages; we have not yet fully emerged. But we are coming to the light; our watchword is, "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, we press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Much has been done, much is doing, more remains to be done.

"The harvest is passed, the summer is ended," and we are assembled, my friends, to give account to one another of our stewardship, to digest our experience into principles, our knowledge into wisdom, and to animate each of our hearts by the aggregate sympathy of all. If the Sunday-school system is ever to be improved, it must be by the patient induction of facts; by the comparison of opinion with opinion, of experience with experience; by the action of mind upon mind, in meetings, reports, addresses. True philosophy in relation to all subjects is of slow

growth, and still slower application. The capabilities of this institution have not yet been wholly fathomed and evolved. And if we are to be carried forward in this evangelical enterprise to higher knowledge and livelier interest, it must be in a considerable degree by bringing ourselves more into sympathy with each other on the subject. My faith, said Cole-ridge, is infinitely increased the moment another joins his assent. We are confederates and fellow-workers in a great and good cause, and it cannot but be highly serviceable for us to meet and mingle our thoughts, affections, and prayers, and to pledge ourselves to new fidelity to the cause of God and his Son.

The spirit of the text is adapted to cheer us in our exertions to educate the young in the Gospel. It pronounces our duty, and promises to fulfil our hopes. It teaches us to look forward to future years for the fruits of our labors, and announces that law of habit which secures to age the acquisitions of youth. "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

I look around and ponder our situation, the condition of our Sunday schools, the greatness of the cause, the interests depending, the attention of parents and teachers and pupils and clergymen, and I have asked myself, What do we most want? Wherein are we most deficient? From the study of my own heart, and the confessions and conduct of others, I have no hesitation in saying, that what is most im-

periously needed is enlarged and enkindled Faith. Here is ever our greatest want, our saddest deficiency, that we lack that very thing on which the whole system of religious education hinges, and around which it revolves. Soon would other evils be remedied, and other obstacles surmounted, were only this principle enthroned in living energy in our hearts. We totter, we fall, because we do not with childlike confidence take hold of that Mighty Hand, stretched forth to lead us to success. We distrust ourselves, we distrust others, and in both we are guilty of the worst of all, distrusting God. We selfishly fear we shall not succeed, as if a Wiser and a Mightier than we were not presiding at the great helm. Hemmed in by the mists and shadows of earth, enfeebled in our capacities of belief and action by our moral delinquencies and timid indolence, we are prone to become cold and faithless respecting the stupendous realities of the spiritual world.

In this state of mind are involved most of the difficulties we lament in ourselves, or others. We complain of a want of interest in parents in the spiritual good of their children. But why are parents uninterested? Because they do not believe in the nature, wants, and sublime destiny of their little ones. We are grieved at the insensibility of teachers. But why are they insensible? Because they have not yet been kindled with a living sense of spiritual things, they do not believe in the mighty interests of the soul, soaring infinitely beyond the

interests of the body. Why is the pastor — mournful apathy! — sometimes found indifferent to the religious training of the children of his flock? He too is tainted with the prevalent unbelief. Why are even the children so often heedless of the use of their priceless opportunities to “get wisdom”? They disbelieve the frozen lessons of their elders. All lack faith, all need it, as the one thing needful. Only infuse one particle of genuine, living faith, and we live. The valley of dry bones swarms with uprisen men. The mustard-seed expands into the tree. No more we falter, no more drivel, no more sleep. We have faith. Faith links us with the Almighty. We are invincible through Him. No longer we handle the unspeakable interests of the soul with listlessness. Our minds kindle and dilate with the solemn grandeur of the work. The great deep is broken up, and with the line of faith we fathom its abysses. Not more keenly does imagination fix on the glistening star, and pursue it through the awful depths of heaven, until it has expanded into a mighty globe, than does faith, looking profoundly into the soul, and afar into eternity, catch a glimpse of the arch-angelic destiny of the little child. Faith alters totally the complexion of religious education; from a task converts it into a delightful privilege, from a non-essential into the all-essential, and sinks all misgivings and obstacles in the sublimity of the cause, the promises of God, and the immortality of the soul.

This faith must have two branches,— a confidence in human nature as capable of receiving religion, and a confidence in the Gospel as the divine instrument of its culture.

1. We have too little faith in the child. Children are common; are often perversely educated; and sometimes far gone in vice. Our trust in their capacities is shaken. We almost unconsciously attribute the fault more to them than to their parents, more to their nature than to their education. But it is a mistake. Our notions on this point savor more of impiety towards the Creator, than we may be aware. By distrusting the child, what do we but cast discredit on the word and promises of God, and blaspheme his handiwork? I read among the golden treasures of his revealed truth, "God created man in his own image"; "God hath made man upright." I see the Saviour smiling on little children, and saying, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven"; "Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." On these and other descriptions of the sonship of man to God, and the capacity of human nature in childhood for religion, we plant ourselves immovably. We defer to no scruples, we hold parley with no doubts. Though the worldly wise may ridicule our fond credulity, though a dark creed may stigmatize us as heretics; we must never, never let go this sheet-anchor of the Sunday school, that children are by their very nature members of the

kingdom of heaven, and never would be driven out of paradise, the "heaven" that "lies about them in their infancy," provided they were rightly and religiously educated.

Children are common. If we do not find here one source of our feeble faith, we do find one cause of our indifference. We become habituated to them. They are no novelty. We see others slighting them, and we soon learn the dangerous habit ourselves. Wrapped up in our supposed wisdom, and hot in the chase of our selfish interests, we overlook these new messengers from the spiritual world. We forget who they are, and why they have come, and who has sent them. We heed not the power with which each deed and word of ours *tells* upon their forming characters, as the hard seal upon the flowing wax. They tabernacle in houses of clay, and we forget their immortality as we do our own. We are not alive to the sublime reality in respect simply to the duration of their existence, that it is henceforth coeval with the Eternal Father. And furthermore, we too little realize that that stupendous and awful range and immensity of being is to be virtuous and happy, or wicked and miserable, very much as the right or wrong direction is given to the unfolding energies here. If we should once place our eye at the telescope of faith, and see the ages upon ages, the worlds after worlds, the heavens above heavens, through which the child may soar towards God, we should be startled out of our stone-blind indifference

to its spiritual education into some just feeling of our responsibility, and our glorious privilege, as its guardians and teachers.

2. But, again, it is requisite to usefulness and success in this cause, that we heartily believe in the instrument as well as the material and the subject, in the Gospel as well as in the child. We must see the wondrous affinity between the truth of God and the spirits he has created. We must see how wisely and beautifully the Gospel is fitted to man's constitution and wants; that not more exquisite is the formation of the eye to receive the light, than is the moral nature of man, before it is warped by actual transgressions, to receive, love, and practise the Christian religion. With the undoubting mind of the husbandman, we are to sow good seed in a good soil. We need to enter into the deep meaning of those figures which liken the Gospel to bread, satisfying hunger; to water, quenching thirst; to light, illuminating the dark world; to life, hidden from the sensual.

Some Indians of John Eliot's time, and who had been under his instruction, being asked how they knew the Scripture to be the word of God, replied, "Because they did find that it did change their hearts, and wrought in them wisdom and humility." This striking answer indicated that these untutored children of the wilderness had arrived at a sense of the fitness of the Gospel to human nature and wants, which it would be happy if the Christian of civilized life always enjoyed.

We must believe that the truths of Christianity, as they are taught in the words and deeds of Jesus, are in nice harmony with the love, trust, imagination, spirituality, innocence, of children. The parables, the miracles, the dialogues, of the Gospels, could not have been more happily adapted to the young, if they had been expressly composed for their instruction. We must realize and act upon this view. We must teach without one shadow of apprehension lest the bread that came down from heaven will not feed the hungry soul. We must see that the Gospel is the express instrument, appointed by God, to educate the young; that it is meat and drink, light and life, to their expanding natures.

Again, we want a stronger confidence in the success of all well-meant and faithful efforts to bring the Gospel into living contact with the undefiled soul. It is true we should shun the extreme of presumption; but we ought never to doubt, that whatever we rightly do in this cause sooner or later has its due effect. It may be objected to what has now been said of the duty of faith in the child, and faith in the Gospel as the God-given instrument to save and bless it, that those who in their youth were placed under the best religious influences, the children of the most exemplary Christians, have often sunk into vice and crime, whilst those who were born and nurtured in the haunts of wickedness have grown up lights in the Church and benefactors to their species. In this objection is couched much of that weakness

of faith of which complaint has now been made. Parents and teachers are most unhappily and falsely led to imagine, that it is a matter pretty much of chance, after all, what characters the young form. They see wheat sown, and tares reaped ; and tares sown, and wheat reaped. They know not what to trust, what to abide by. They float hither and thither, at the capricious mercy of every "wind of doctrine." O that they might see the truth in this matter ! O that they would believe with unconquerable trust, what man's nature and God's word conspire to teach, that no word, no effort, no teaching, no prayer, can by any possibility be lost in this glorious work ! Let them remember, that we anchor ourselves on the promises of God, that we stand on the Rock of Ages, in our confidence that our labors to train up the young in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord" will not be frustrated.

Still, it will be said, we may not succeed. We may not, and why ? Because of some fatal leakage ; because we undo in one way all we do in another ; because our example mocks our precepts ; because the bad company abroad, into which our children fall, neutralizes the good influences of home and the Sunday school, and we are convicted of the folly of pouring water into a sieve with the idle hope of filling it. We may not succeed for the present, — who is sower and reaper the same day ? — but we should sow, assured that in due time we shall reap, if we faint not. Encouragements from our nature,

from human experience, from the Holy Word, bid us go on fearlessly, zealously, perseveringly, and however forlorn our hope may for the present appear, we are never to despair in our exertions to educate, save, and bless those who have God for their Father and immortality for their lifetime. "If good seed," said Robert Raikes, "be sown in the mind at an early period of human life, though it show itself not again for many years, it may please God at some future period to cause it to spring up and bring forth a plentiful harvest." John Bunyan, John Newton, Richard Cecil, and many others, are striking illustrations of the remark. Out of unsightly shrubs, they grew up beautiful and fruitful trees in the garden of God.

But it is only in comparatively few cases that we must hope, because we dare not yield to despair. In the majority of instances, just in the proportion that our labors are abundant, abundant will be our rewards. A systematic, evangelical, and universal training of the young in the way they should go, would produce the most excellent and happy results in literature, society, and religion. In literature, when genius shall be baptized into the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In society, when brother's heart shall be knit to brother's heart, and there shall be one pulse of love; when we shall carry forth to all nations the balance of justice in one hand, and the olive-branch of peace in the other. Voices from the great Western Ca-

naan, voices from the far isles of the sea, voices from a thousand centuries to come, thunder in our ears with mighty tones the solemn obligation of the present generation to educate their children in the Gospel. With accents thrilling as the trump of the archangel, they command us to prepare for a state of human welfare, more glorious than ever charmed the poet's imagination, or kindled the prophet's eye. Most blessed too must be the effects on religion of this religious education of all children. No more the dead letter, but the living spirit; no more a stereotyped faith and a traditional piety, but Christian inquiry and growth without pause or limit. The jangling of the sects also will be melted into an expansive charity as the coronation of Jesus, King of mankind, draws near. Then shall man's state of probation bear some remote resemblance to his state of fruition. Is it too much to say, that the universal and increasing interest in the religious education of children is a bright augury, predicting this advancement as probable, as certain? Ill would it become us to despond, when prophets desired to see these things, and desired in vain, yet suffered not their faith to waver. It would show but a weak trust in God to despair of the cause of Christ now, when he despaired not of it on the Cross.

No interest ought to have a deeper hold upon the hearts of parents, than the religious culture of their children. They are the natural instructors, but they may call in the assistance of coadjutors in the moral

and religious, as well as the intellectual, education of their offspring. Permit me to inquire of those who sustain the parental relation, whether they are sensible of the uncalculated responsibility that rests upon them, to provide for their interesting young charge all, and the best, means and appliances to a thorough Christian education. Do they see, that, whilst they are laying up money, their children are treasuring up characters for eternity? Alas for that father or mother who is more set on riches than education, who is laboring more anxiously to amass great wealth to bequeathe to a bereaved family, than to impart to them the priceless jewel of a Christian spirit! Alas for that parent who thinks himself absolved from his duty of instructing his sons and daughters through the instrumentality of the Sunday school! O, let him see how all is needed, and is blessed to the child's good, — precept at school, example at home, and prayer and love everywhere! Let him bear it ever in remembrance, how much good he can do, and how much evil avert, by faithfully training up his children to fear and love God, and keep his commandments. Soon those now at the breast will be in the marts of trade and the workshops of labor; those now at school will become the fathers and mothers of families, holding various offices of trust, responsibility, and distinction in the various educational, political, and religious institutions of the land; the glory or the disgrace of their friends, shaping to freedom and virtue, or corruption and ruin, the

changeable destinies of their country, putting backward or forward the mighty interests of the human race. How all-important that they should now imbibe that life-giving truth, which saves from error and sin !

Let teachers too be reminded of the importance, the delicacy, the grandeur, of their work. Cherish faith in the child, faith in the Gospel, and faith in your own usefulness under the good favor of God. "Be not faithless, but believing." Live as you teach, that you may not overthrow your instructions by your ill example. Vivify your zeal by prayer, and cultivate the tenderness of a mother's self-sacrificing love for your pupils. Remember that they are the hope of their country, the hope of the Church, the hope of the world. Esteem it not as a task, but rejoice in it as a precious privilege, that you can confer the greatest good upon others, whilst you are augmenting that good in yourselves. Be devoutly thankful, my friends, that it falls to your lot to join alliance with the Saviour and the Father of men, in the sublime employment of conducting human beings to honor, glory, and immortality; that you have it in your power to give not merely a cup of cold water, but the waters of life everlasting, to these little ones. Labor evermore with an elevating and strengthening consciousness of the dignity and the excellence of your calling. What work, this side of heaven, can be so acceptable to God, as that of lending a brotherly, a sisterly hand, to aid the young and inexperienced

in preparing for life here and for ever ; as that of elevating them to their heritage of love, liberty, and eternal life ; as that of starting into a living and harmonious growth the folded germs of a deathless spirit ? They have not yet crossed the Rubicon of lawless ambition, nor drank the Lethe waters of sensual indulgence, nor wished, like Midas, that everything they touched might be turned into gold. They are pure ; it is your happy privilege to aid them in becoming positively virtuous and holy. To provide these young immortals, but lately launched into this tempestuous world, with the compass of religion, and the anchor of a heavenly hope, is the most exalted labor in which men or angels can share. Yours also is a “reward beyond this world and time.” Heaven and earth shall pass away sooner than the good you do be effaced from the tablets of the human soul, or the records of heaven. The blazing sapphires of the sky shall be extinguished in utter darkness, before the fruits of your Sunday-school instruction shall perish, or cease to afford you the refined satisfaction of doing the will of God.

My younger hearers and friends will recollect those words of our Saviour,—“unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.” As your parents and teachers have done much for you, you will feel that your obligations are great. You will remember to use your precious opportunities faithfully ; you will seek to make those returns to your friends and benefactors which they most love,

the returns of good characters, upright lives, Christian spirits. Be entreated now, in this fair and glorious prime of your days, to give your hearts to those things which never decay, to those beings who will never deceive you. Remember your Saviour and Father now, before your love has been lost upon things that are worthless and treacherous. Bear it in mind, that there is no sight on earth so sweet and beautiful as an obedient and virtuous child. There is no flower that opens in spring, there is no bird that sings in summer, there is no star that shines in heaven, there is no diamond, sparkling from the mines, so delightful to look upon, as an affectionate and religious child.

“Of such is the kingdom of heaven.” Nothing gladdens a teacher so much as docile and virtuous pupils. They are his “crown of rejoicing.” Nothing makes a parent’s heart sing for joy, like a good son or daughter. The father thinks his labors well repaid. The mother forgets all her cares and watchings, and points to her dutiful children, as the Roman lady is related to have done in ancient times, and exclaims, “Behold my jewels!” God from heaven looks with complacency upon the youth who love him and keep his commandments, and will in his good time take them to his celestial mansions.

DISCOURSE VIII.



THE SOUL'S WANT OF GOD.

MY HEART AND MY FLESH CRIETH OUT FOR THE LIVING GOD.—
Psalm lxxxiv. 2.

THE chief want of man is God. He has various faculties and senses, each of which craves its specific and proper good, the eye light, the stomach food, the ear sounds, the brain thought, the conscience right, the heart love. But the cry of the whole human being, the need of the whole united powers, is the Supreme Good. Both heart and flesh cry out for the living God; the one in its frailty claiming a support to lean upon, and the other in its far-reaching affections and aspirations a never-ending and infinite excellence. The soul is for God, and God for the soul. What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. Many are unhappy and do not know the cause of their unhappiness, but the deep and constant cause, below all others, is the absence from the true light of life. They may eat, drink, and amass wealth, and satisfy the intellect with knowledge, but these desires are not the deep-

est. They are on the surface. The heart cries out for something more, and better.

The Apostle speaks of living "without God and without hope in the world." To live without God is to live without hope. We can have no true hope but in him. The soul trembles till it points to its eternal pole-star in the heavens. It is restless until it finds rest in the All-sufficient Being. Without God all is dark without, and all is in disorder within. Desert him, and we exile ourselves to a Sahara without verdure, and to a Siberia without heat. Disobey him, and we cut ourselves off from the protection of those laws which are the only safeguard of our being. We may have every other blessing, and may say, with the Laodiceans of old, "We are rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing"; but we are really "wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked."

"Give us this bread of life," cries the soul. The orphan child is always in search for his Father. With restless desires, with dumb and piteous cries, with wanderings into far countries, with eager chase after pleasures and vanities, man journeys through life, but he spends his strength for naught, when he has not secured this main interest. "God," cry the nations, — "give us the knowledge of him"; and they agonize, build temples, worship idols, torment their own bodies, make painful pilgrimages, until the true light shines upon them, and they learn to love, worship, and serve him, the one living and true God.



The superficial desires of the body may be satisfied and put to rest; but the yearning of the soul after its proper good is enduring. All through life, in vivid joy, in blank indifference, in sharp grief, in danger, sickness, sudden changes, in all emergencies, our whole nature — heart and flesh — feels after God, if happily it may find him. The old English poet truly said, —

“ Unless above himself he can
Erect himself, how mean a thing is man ! ”

Says Leighton, “ God hath suited every creature he hath made with a convenient good to which it tends, and in the obtainment of which it rests and is satisfied. Now in this is the excellency of man, that he is made capable of a communion with his Master, and because capable of it, unsatisfied without it; the soul (so to speak), being cut out to that largeness, cannot be filled with less. It is made for Him, and is therefore still restless till it meet with Him.”

1. The first step in this answer to the deepest want of human nature is the conviction *that God is, — that God lives*. Heart and flesh cry; where is the response? Joyful is the moment in the soul's experience when the reality of God's being comes over us with its full power. Revelation does not undertake to prove to us the being of God, but it implies it throughout, and that is the most persuasive way of teaching it. It does not argue it, and therefore it does not arouse opposition. Faith is the first condition of all religious good, not cold intellect-

ual assent, but believing with the whole heart unto righteousness. We see him not by sense, but we know him by the soul. Knowledge is larger and truer than sight. We see not a pain, but we feel it. We see not the virtues and characters of our friends, but they are among the most real things to us. We see not foreign countries, but they lie clear and well defined in the domain of our knowledge. Mathematics demonstrate their truths to our intellectual convictions. We cannot but receive them. But the truths of morals and faith rest on a broader basis of our whole spiritual, as well as intellectual nature. They take the deeper form, not of convictions, but of persuasions, not so definite and decided, but more comprehensive and satisfying to the whole man. When children wish to describe anything as particularly good and excellent, they say that it is *real*. The first need of the soul is to feel that God is real, — the great reality and essence of all things. And if sin had not shut up and darkened the windows of our being, this gracious light would flow in on every side. Every moment God would arrive at the soul in his blessings, — sun, rain, and food, and home with its group of loving ones, and all nature and society, would reflect him in upon the inmost heart in bright and glorious colors, and in awful distinctness and power.

2. Then we are to feel that He is *Present and Living*. The belief of not a few seems to be in a past God, a deceased, departed Deity, and the world as a

huge skeleton out of which all the soul has gone, not an abode for the indwelling Power, but the ruins of his former stately palace. But he has not made the world, and then retired from it. He is not an absentee proprietor. He is the present Creator, the *living* God, as on the world's first morning. He dyes the flower, and ripens the corn. Laws are but his uniform modes of working. Forces are but the heavings of the indwelling Almighty. He is, and he is present. Here, to-day, in these sweet heavens filled with holy light, and in this earth garbed in beautiful plants and colored with rich hues, and in this air on which the Sabbath hymn is borne, a solemn presence broods, — an inconceivable, and sublime, and mysterious Being is round about us. *How* it is, we cannot know or explain. We cannot explain any more how it is *we* are here, in these bodies. We only know it is so. God is a greater mystery. The finite can only catch a distant glimpse of the Infinite. The *fact* is the important thing to feel, not to know the *how*. The Great Eye, looking on the evil and the good, is in every place, as our childish books taught us. But we should be in error to imagine that presence one of scrutiny and watching alone, to detect our sins, and spy out our weaknesses. That Eye of Heaven is bright with unutterable interest and love, and we can only fear its look, as Peter did that of Christ, when we have done wrong.

I lately saw a Catholic representation of the Deity

in the form of the Trinity, — the Father, a venerable old man, seated on one side, with the earth as a globe on his lap ; on the other side a younger man, as the Son ; and midway between the two an illuminated Dove, hovering, as the Holy Ghost. I have also seen, in a recent number of Godey's Lady's Book, a series of pictures on the Creation, in which God was represented as a man, at work on the Creation in its various parts. All such images blur and mar for many minds the sense of the universal, spiritual, glorious, and benignant presence of the Father of all. For when we make God man, we make him finite. But he is in heaven, boundless, pure, bright, majestic, ever over us, as the infinite sky, except that no cloud ever obscures, no storms disturb, the serenity of his Being.

All great truths are necessarily indefinite, — the existence and presence of God, inspiration, the immortality of the human soul. They must all stand in our minds in large and flowing outlines. Our compasses are not made to draw their exact circumference. We are not of a calibre and bore to carry that ball. We are not to cut truth to the quick, for then it bleeds to death. God is not a form, any form, — even the most beautiful or majestic, man. He is a Presence, universal, living, all-powerful, and all-loving. Too often he is addressed in revival meetings as if he were specially near, or as the priests of Baal cried unto their God ; as if he were a great way off, when he is near ; or as requiring endless repetitions in our requests, when he knows all even before

we speak ; or as waiting to be entreated with agonizing supplications, when he is more placable and benign than any earthly parent to give all necessary good to his children. He overflows creation. He is all in all. While we walk forth over these rich scenes of earth, and under the stupendous sky, we should cherish that "sense sublime" the poet speaks of, —

"Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the breathing air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man, —
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking beings, all objects of thought,
And rolls through all things."

3. But the heart and flesh have another note in their cry, and it is for a *Good Being*, or, as our Saxon has it, *God*, that is, the Good, whom we may love. If God is, and if he is present, what matters it, if he is a malicious Power, planning our pain and misery, and eventually decreeing our eternal ruin? He who teaches such a view of the Supreme, educates infidels. Calvinism has created hosts of unbelievers. It is a religion suited to some dark and stern and terrible race of beings, who imagine God altogether such a being as themselves ; not to us tender-hearted men, women, and children. If we may suppose such a thing, it would be a religion for the lion and the rhinoceros ; not for hearts that may be broken, for eyes that can weep, and for sinning, suffering, dying mortals. They ask for something gentler, milder, brighter. True, there is evil ; but evil is not abso-

lute, but relative. "If I were God," said a divine, with more point than reverence, "I would have it all my own way." With reverence let us say, He does have it all his own way. There is no Almighty Devil to compete with Him the throne of the universe, as Milton has fabled, no everlasting evil, no eternal hell. He is Absolute, Eternal, Almighty Good. Evil is the shadow which his finite and imperfect creatures cast, not *his* shadow. There is indeed pain, suffering, sin. But we must not judge the work before it is done. A temple begun is deformity itself; advanced, it begins to put on grace and majesty; completed, we see that the imperfections were necessary stages to its glorious consummation. This life is a beginning, a school, a discipline, a foundation. The finished temple soars far beyond, and its pinnacle reaches up into worlds above, not of time and sense. God, the Good, is in all systems, all beings, and in all working according to his own being, that is, for good. Father is his proper name. Nature, Providence, Jesus, all teach this comforting lesson. And when the heart in its hopes and affections, and the flesh in its griefs and pangs, cry, the response comes from every side, and is echoed and re-echoed in endless and harmonious sounds, — God is good. This is the psalm of David. This is the sermon of Jesus. Humanity, blind and dark as it is, sings this hymn, God is good; and this is the sublime music of the spheres, God is good. Angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim,

chant it to the listening ear of eternity, God is good, God is good.

4. But this is not enough. The want of the soul is not only for a Good, but for *a Great God*, whom we may adore. It admires greatness with an even earlier and intenser admiration than goodness. It worships genius. If a new poet, an Alexander Smith, appear, the whole world is anxious to read and know him. This is no factitious taste. It is inborn and necessary. We may and do often mistake what is greatness, but we all admire it, desire, rejoice in it. Our nature has been constructed on a scale so large and generous itself, that it cannot in the end be satisfied with anything less than the great, the vast, the illimitable. We go far and study long to reach these qualities. The life of a man like Napoleon, the presence of Niagara, the Atlantic Ocean in a storm, a battle, an earthquake, a volcano, appeal to something in us which rises up, and sometimes, to our own astonishment, claims kindred with these forces in man and in nature. In the infinite power and greatness of God, this inborn reverence of our nature for the great finds its true and purifying object. This passion for greatness, unguided, makes us idolaters, but directed and enlightened by Christianity, it makes us worshippers of God in spirit and in truth. Man-worship is empty; mere fond admiration of a cave or a mountain is sentimentalism; the praise of genius is often as hollow as sounding brass; for only when objects are put in their right places,

and we respect the greatest as the greatest, and all things less as emanations and manifestations of that uncreated glory, do our intellectual and spiritual faculties come into their proper order, and work to their appointed ends. The heart and flesh cry out, Give us something greater than the Alps, or the sea, or man, or angel; yea, they stretch their wings to a flight beyond all visible majesty of heavens or earth, and ask for God, for Him who is greater than all his works, and then, and not till then, are they satisfied. Our tastes change very much from youth onward. Things we once passionately admired cease to move us. The soul has got beyond them. It is travelling upward. It exhausts one thing after another. But there is one youthful sentiment that is never outgrown, — that rises with our intellectual stature, and spreads with our moral expansion, and soars with our spiritual aspirations, — and that is our faith in the Great God, —

“And, as it hastens, every age

But makes its brightness more divine.”

5. The nature of man has been so created as to seek after a *Wise and Infinite Intelligence*. We admire with huge respect the men even who have been able to pocket a little science, who can read a dozen languages, who are largely conversant with affairs, and know things as they are. A skilful invention is heralded from hemisphere to hemisphere. He who has read one of the characters in Nature's alphabet, or spelled out a few syllables or

words in her mighty lore, is hailed with all the titles of glory. But no libraries, geniuses, scientific or literary associations, no fragments and crumbs that fall from the table of knowledge, can meet the unextinguishable thirst of man for the spiritual and the immortal. Let him not think to fill an infinite craving with anything less than the Infinite. Newton expressed it all, when, with all his vast illumination of wisdom, entering profoundly as he did into the secret chambers of the knowledge of the universe, he said he seemed but as a child wandering on the beach, picking up here and there and admiring a prettier stone or shell than usual, while the great ocean of truth rolled dark and boundless beyond him.

This yearning for a God wise, as well as mighty and good, whom we may trust as well as love and reverence, is especially felt in the difficult problems of our own life. Is the plan of the world intelligent, unerring, or is it a failure and an abortion? Milton gave great and just offence to our reverence, when he describes the Devil as overreaching God, and defeating his plan in the creation of the earth and the formation of man. Who is this Devil, we ask? If he has done the thing once, may he not again? may he not always? and, finally, may he not carry down to his own black abodes the splendid trophy of a lost human soul, snatched from the hand of God, — yea, of multitudes of such? And fearful to say, such is the theology, creed, faith, of the dominant churches of Christendom at this day. No, I will not say faith,

for it is too horrible to be the distinctly conscious and well-considered faith of an intelligent age. Against such a faith, if it anywhere lurks among the dry husks and stubble of an antiquated body of divinity, human nature, heavenly and earthly, heart and flesh, cry out in protest. They crave a God of wisdom, one, so to speak with awe, who understands himself; not the God of Calvin, overruled by a Law mightier than himself, the decree of Fate, — the principle of the Greek tragedy; not the God of some philosophers, — a Being slowly coming to self-consciousness in man; but an original, uncreated, unerring, infinite, conscious Wisdom, whom we can trust, and know that we are not deceived, and follow without going astray; whose works and whose word are full of light and life, and conduct every true aspirant and humble follower and servant to never-ending rest and peace.

But if I have at all rightly interpreted the significance of this cry, which is for ever ascending from the breast, and seeking after God, you may ask, How shall it be satisfied? I would not dogmatize, and say by any one way, but rather by all ways. It is more in the waiting, receiving, and teachable state of the soul, than it is by methods, cultures, churches, and dispensations. When the final reckoning comes, and honor is paid to whom honor is due, I doubt not it will be found that Mahomet saved some as well as Moses, and that China, now seeming to awake with wondrous life, and cry through all its millions after

something better than it has had, after the living God, — that China has not been for so many ages a mere blank and desert of souls. Still, we cannot doubt the best way is best. The purest truth is a million times better than truth with one drop of alloy or sediment of error. Seek, then, for the truth, and in the truth God will ever be coming, and entering in and taking possession of the soul, and driving out every darkness and weakness. Rest not short of God. The mistake of the churches is, they stop before they come to the end. The end is God, the ever-present, living, good, powerful, wise; they pause in men, they call themselves by a human appellation; they halt at the saints, the Virgin Mary; their timid and unbelieving worship does not climb to the eternal temple, and present itself filially but confidently before the great white throne of the Father. The Christian Church in general has not risen above Christ. It has been the *Christian*, not the *Divine* era. He is indeed the God to most, above and beyond whom they conceive of no God, though he was weary, and sad, and tempted, and ignorant, as he himself says, of some things, and finally died, — all of which God could not be and do, and be a God in the highest sense. The Church must learn that the end is not Christ, but God; that Christ is the Mediator, medium, way to the Father. He does not attract our love, or regard, or worship, to himself, and detain it there. He prays and teaches us to pray to the Father. He comes into the world, not to do his own

will, but the will of the Father. My Father is greater than I; and he prayed that his disciples might be one with him, as he was one with the Father, that the chain might be complete, and the soul find a way for its ascent to God and heaven,—men united to Christ, Christ and his Church united to the Father. The world is a sublime ruin, and the Church itself is a superstition, until God becomes all in all. What he fills is filled, and what he blesses is blessed. We wander in pain and sin, hopeless and helpless, until we come to Christ, and through Christ come to the Father. May we each and all hearken to this voice after God, ever rising up from the deepest places of the spirit-world, and yearning with strong crying and tears after the Supreme Good and Love. The best things of earth will only mock and ruin us, if we obey not this first and most urgent of all wants, this hunger and thirst of an immortal nature. Pray, read, think, labor, study, do anything, do everything that is right, to gain this true wisdom. Spend life in this service, and it will be well spent. All its various scenes and trials, its joys and blessings and hopes, its schools and homes and churches and governments, will then have all done for us their inconceivable and eternal benefit. For they will have ripened within these frail, but never-dying spirits, the faith and hope and love of the One Living and True God, Father of all, of Christ and men and angels, now and for ever.

DISCOURSE IX.



BE STILL AND KNOW GOD.

BE STILL, AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD.—Psalm xlv. 10.

EVERY period and every place have their peculiar obstructions to the Christian life. The mistake committed by theologians is in making the Devil but one, when his name is Legion. The great inductive philosopher assigned four kinds of prejudices to man, which he termed respectively, idols of the tribe, or those inherent in human nature; idols of the den, or those peculiar to the individual; idols of the market, or those arising from intercourse and association with mankind; and the idols of the theatre, or the errors which come from false systems of philosophy and theology, and which give fictitious or theatrical notions of things. The devils might have a similar classification, and there is one of those which come from the market, or from intercourse and association with mankind, that might without slander be called the Devil of Haste.

We live in an age of hurry. There is an evil spirit abroad in our civilization, that drives men too

fast and too far. Life, that was formerly likened to a journey, a voyage, or a pilgrimage, has become a race, a chase, in which not bit and bridle, but spurs and whip, are deemed the rider's best equipment. Our gospel is condensed into one line: "What thou doest, do *quickly*." We overdo even our good things. If we are righteous, and undertake righteous reforms, we are sometimes in the category of Solomon, "righteous overmuch." "Drive" is the word of the times. A late writer has said that "a railway train should be the emblem on our shield, with the motto, Hurrah!"

In short, the Devil of Haste has entered in and possessed us, and he is not a good angel, but a veritable devil. He hurries us so fast that we have no time to "be still and know God," no place quiet enough to read our Bibles and say our prayers. Or, if he should put his hand upon religion, he wishes, to use the vulgar phrase, to "put it through quick," and he has therefore a high estimation of camp-meetings and revivals, and the whole enginery of fear and excitement, as speedy labor-saving machines to accomplish a work, which, in the slower times of prophets, apostles, martyrs, and saints, it was thought could only be effected by a lifetime of prayer and charity and self-denial. This American system of conversion will, we fear, lose in quality all it gains in time. Its style of Christianity will be perishable, we apprehend, as it is rapid. Character is not a blow struck once, but a growth. What is life given

for, but that, through its revolving years and circling ages, the intellectual and spiritual constitution may come, like the physical, to their gradual perfection by successive stages of advancement? There is no short cut to heaven, no swift march we can steal upon the sure-abiding and the long-unfolding laws of this most ancient universe. A day's work in a day is all we can ever do; and all that is done more than that, we have to settle for afterwards under high penalties for disobedience.

In education, the methods of haste, the early and long-continued confinement of very young children in close and ill-ventilated rooms, the short, twelve-lesson modes of learning, the forcing processes of prizes, parts, and embittering emulation to stuff the youthful memory with the largest amount of studies, whether understood and digested or not, belong to the same system. Hence tender plants are watered so much that they are drowned. The fuel is heaped so abundantly on the fire, that every spark goes out. The culture of an immortal mind excludes by the very terms the notion of a hot-house development. But the present results are such as to bid us pause in our headlong career, "be still and know God" and his laws, and sit humbly and quietly at the inner oracle, and gain reliable intimations how we may touch this inward spiritual organization of a human being, a thousand times more delicate and marvellous than any watch-work of wheels and springs, and not throw it into lasting and perhaps

irretrievable disorder. Young ladies "finish their education" in their teens, and are "brought out" to flutter through a brief season of admiration, and die of consumption before the age at which their grandmothers began to live. Young men foolishly buy their time before they are twenty-one years of age, to go to California, or some other splendid lottery, where the blanks are counted by thousands, and the prizes by units.

Now if we will stop long enough to hear a word of exhortation, we shall see that, while activity, industry, progress, and despatch are all good in their places and within due bounds, the reckless habit of the present generation is not good for anybody or anything. Man was not made with wings to fly, but with feet to walk. And if by sail, engine, rail, and wire he can move with the steam and with the lightning, there is all the more reason why the leisure which he thus accumulates more and more, by his labor and time saving machinery, he should devote to repose, and calm meditation on God and duty, and earnest supplication for the holy and serene life of Jesus. There is time and there is eternity before us, and whatever is worth doing at all, is worth doing well. They who run may read, but running is not favorable to reading. The slow-paced are sometimes the quickest at the goal. We live but once in this world, and we are bound to extract out of life, by trial, experience, exercise of our faculties and the associated power and knowledge of

the race, and the superior illumination from above, all the good this world can yield. But this hot and impatient mood of life leaves a host of duties not done, a multitude of truths not meditated, a world of pleasures not enjoyed, and a constellation of graces and virtues not cultivated and assimilated. Let us know that quicksilver is not the only metal, nor lightning the only element. Instead of this feverish and eager rushing across the stage of life, as of the horse plunging into the battle, we will lift up serene brows to the calm heavens, and we will repeat in a low tone that beautiful strain, which has been chanted for two thousand years, to quiet the restless bosom of humanity, never more restless than here and now,—“Be still, and know that I am God.”

So highly was silence esteemed by that remarkable reformer and philosopher of the ancient world, Pythagoras, that he enjoined upon his disciples a probation of five years without speaking, by which their minds might be cleared of trifles, and learn self-control. We can easily conceive that such a rule, absurd as it appears at first, was based upon deep principles, and we know from history that noble spirits were trained in that school of still meditation, whom men consented to call divine, and whose systems of thought ruled for generations over the most polished nations of the earth.

Nor has the Christian world been without its representatives of the virtues of silence and rest. To

the unspeaking and hushed Quaker assembly the secret of divine truth and love has been unveiled. The still of mind would seem to share the blessing with the pure in heart, of seeing God. Immortal principles have crystallized in secrecy and calmness of soul. And the purity and spirituality of doctrine, and the freedom from the grosser sins and corrupt institutions and customs of the world, which are naturally associated with Quakerism, testify that a blessing from above has descended in those rapt and heaven-opened pauses of the mind.

Who indeed can doubt, that, if men would oftener stop in their hurried life, and recur to the First Great Cause, and cast a look to heaven while toiling and worrying themselves among their earthly cares, they would be far better armed against temptation, and that fountains of unfading happiness would be opened to the thirsting soul? Who is weak, when the thought of God is in his mind? Who is poor, when the love of God is in his heart? Who is wretched, when he consciously rests on an Almighty arm?

For our spiritual attainments depend less upon isolated efforts, or direct lessons, than on the general moods and postures of the soul, produced by the whole web of discipline in which we are enveloped. Life is truly found in a heavenly exaltation of our whole being, in the attitude of the mind and its habitual gait and carriage as immortal, in the disenchantment from the transient trifles which crumble

to pieces in our hand, in the resumption by the soul of its native and conscious dignity, as a child of the Infinite Father and an heir of eternal life. Every man must be aware at times of this shining up within him of a central light, like a candle in a transparent vase, the enkindling of a celestial heat, which he certainly never originated, and which as certainly he can never extinguish. Every one must feel, as he is perplexed with his swarm of little cares, and wearied with the daily drudgery of his oft-repeated work, that he is a kind of Belisarius, an emperor begging; a species of Pegasus, born to fly through the empyrean, but toiling in the harness of earth. There is a sublime discontent that is proof of immortality. While, then, there must be no relaxation of fidelity in the smallest details of duty, how good it is again and again to uplift the flagging soul into a serener atmosphere, to touch spiritual things and receive their electric shock, to be still and know that God is God for ever and ever. Often and often must we thus charge home upon our dull insensibility, and vitalize our sluggish gratitude. But whatever helps us thus to retire from the bustling world of sense into the tranquil world of infinite love, beauty, and glory, be it a book, a prayer, the call of a friend, the claim of the poor, or a Scripture, or a poem, or a flower, as surely raises us heavenward, places us in a condition from which we can never wholly fall away, as if a visible arm were stretched out from the opening sky to lift us upwards.

A little girl, who for the first time was passing through the streets of a crowded city with her mother, innocently inquired, "Mother, when do the people get time to pray here?" It is a question, like many of those put by children, easier asked than answered. When verily do men, either in city or country, amidst the incessant demands upon their attention, get time to quiet their nerves, to call home their wandering thoughts, and really and calmly to think of duty and of eternity? Hurried as they are, from morn to latest eve, not only with the natural haste of labor, and quick steps, and urgent calls on body and brain, but with the speed of machines, with engines "grating harsh thunder," and the lightning revolution of countless wheels, what spare moment is there when one can call his soul his own, and can direct that soul, freighted with all its wondrous affections and yearnings, to the Infinite Father and to the heavenly home? Alas! how much of the time we call life is really the death, the deadness, of the living part! We vacate the ample palace of the soul, to take up mean and miserable quarters in the hut of coarse and brutish worldliness. How much we need to do what we were told when children to do in reading, mind our steps! Did a day never pass, my brother, when close and absorbing business so steeped your senses in forgetfulness, that even the thought of God, much less a calm and conscious leaning upon him, a felt uplifting and grateful opening of the heart to him, as the Fountain of light and love,

never for one blessed instant visited you from twilight to twilight? Sterne fancied the poor captive pining in his cell, and visited with one straggling ray of light from the cheerful upper world, but the prisoner of worldliness is sunk in a subterranean dungeon, whose solid darkness is not pierced by a solitary ray.

When the mortal rests on the mortal, it is full of toil and trouble; but when it rests on the immortal, it finds rest and peace. Man leaning on man finds his support but a fragile reed; but, leaning on God, he cannot be greatly moved. The noble German dying asked for a great thought to refresh him. So is it with us all living, as well as dying. Cast in these mortal straits, raised and depressed by the fluctuating body, wounded and bleeding in the life-battle, washed and whelmed in the surges of this time-sea, to which we cannot say, "Peace, be still!" we thirst to be refreshed by a great thought, and the greatest of all thoughts is that of God. When we earnestly think of his glorious being, of his vast creation, of his protecting providence, and of his fatherly grace and love, when we strive to acquaint ourselves with him, and to bow to his will, the agitation in our bosoms subsides, and peace, heavenly peace, waves over us her palm.

This peace is not the stagnation of our powers, but their harmonious action. It is not the insensibility of a single faculty or affection, but the subordination of all, under the legitimate dominion of con-

science and reason, whose right it is to reign. It is the body with every limb and sense performing its proper function without usurpation and without unworthy compliance. It is the spirit with every capacity growing, every taste in exercise, and every affection aspiring, reigning over the body and under God to the fulfilling of his divine plan of a human being. So that peace is not death, dulness, torpor, which too many associate with religion, but true vigor, life which is life. The larger, therefore, by study, discipline, obedience, suffering, our acquaintance with God becomes, the more entirely our being is spread over his creation, and the greater the number of points at which it is brought into harmonious affinity with his laws in creation, in providence, and in revelation, the broader the basis of our peace, and the more immovable and eternal the soul's rest. We see the truth of both propositions resolved into one, to be still that we may know God, and to acquaint ourselves with him that we may be at peace. It is because we are so timid in our faith, so hesitating in our love, so reluctant and feeble in our service, that we are so much at the mercy of circumstances, and possess so little of the peace of God which passeth understanding. But cast off fearlessly, restless voyager of earth, from these shores. Let the familiar headlands disappear; launch out into the mighty deep, and fear not its winds and waves; for all that ocean on which you sail is an ocean of love. Its icebergs even are vast monuments of love, its tropic

suns blaze with love, and its awful hurricanes, when Omnipotence rides the gale and heaven and earth are mingled together, and its gentle calms, when not a ripple breaks the mirror, — all, all are love, and the heart that bows intelligently and affectionately to the will of the Infinite Helmsman of the voyage, will abide in peace, and abide in it for ever.

The introductory passage of St. Augustine's Confessions gives us a volume of wisdom on this subject, in few words: "O God, thou awakest us to delight in thy praise; for thou makest us for thyself, and our heart is restless until it find rest in thee."

The whole argument in behalf of the culture of a calm, meditative spirit is narrowed to one fact, and the exhortation to be drawn from thence is as effectual as any words could utter or accumulate, — JESUS PRAYED. Not for example's sake alone, not from habit, education, form, but from the present and felt needs of the spirit, and its aspirations heavenward, he prayed to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God. He passed whole nights in prayer, not as an ascetic task, but as the natural expression of his spiritual state. But in our humbler case worship and meditation cannot be wholly lyrical and spontaneous. There must mingle with them some consciousness of the earthly that is resisted and overcome, as well as of the heavenly that is won and enjoyed. Our spiritual wings cannot always be spread, nor our flight be to the sun. There must be a certain religious mechanism to these bodies, turning on

joints, and to these souls, asleep one third of the time in the depths of unconsciousness and irresponsibility. The fixed hour, day, place, book, are not to be despised. But however the pause comes, come it should and must often in the eager rush of worldliness and care. "Be still, and know that I am God." "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still." "Acquaint now thyself with God, and be at peace." The earth makes no noise or jar in its sublime revolution, and all the silver spheres of heaven turn on harmonious axles. Impatient mortal, look up, and adore, and be still before Him who is greater than all his works. Think more calmly, act more serenely, pray more fervently. The Christian soul, like its divine prototype, should move with a holy stillness and peace in its place. Shone upon by heavenly light and moved by divine power, it will seek and pray to enter into that oneness with God by which all its motions around its own axis, so to say, will be parts and arcs of the larger and serener revolution around the Central Sun.

DISCOURSE X.

UNION WITH GOD AND MAN.

THAT THEY MAY BE MADE PERFECT IN ONE. — John xvii. 23.

THE last prayer of our Saviour for his followers was, — “ That they all may be one ; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us ; — that they may be one, even as we are one ; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.” “ *To be made perfect in one* ” — one with God and one with each other — is the perfection and happiness of mankind. An ultimate aim of Christianity, accordingly, is union, harmony, love. Instead of the present ceaseless war of man upon man, the selfish strife of sects and parties, the worrying competition of business, the hostility of castes and classes, the grinding and crushing of city against city and country against country, it proposes peace, — peace in the family, in the church, in the neighborhood, in the nation, and between the nations. So towards the Eternal Majesty of heaven, instead of the distance and coldness of strangers, or the stubbornness of enemies, it would give the confidence and

delightful ease of children in a father's house, so that we may feel God's world is man's home, and live before the Highest in a holy and affectionate spirit of friendship. And the Gospel will not accomplish its blessed mission to man until it shall have established this brotherhood of the species, this childhood of man to God, and this fatherhood of God to man, not as splendid theories, but as living, practical realities.

"That they may be made perfect in one," are words written all over *the works of God*. They contain a profound philosophy, as well as indicate a perfect religion. Union is the law of universal nature, and disunion the exception; and disunion takes place only that there may be a more perfect union. It is the composition of seven different colors that makes the absolute light. It is the mixture of three diverse gases that produces the vital air; and of two, that gives us the vital water. It is the congeries of the discordant materials which science analyzes and classifies, that constitutes the round and revolving earth. And what is true of the so-called elements also holds good of all the various objects of matter; not one but is a union, a composition, an agreement. And when this union is broken, it is only a temporary transition to a new and better union; even matter itself for ever rising on an ascending scale of progress, until, instead of the original chaos, we now behold a beautiful and inhabited globe.

This magnificent law of God is in force and man-

ifestation beyond our little globe. It is inscribed on the stars of the firmament, and chanted in the music of the spheres. Orbit circling within orbit and system within system, above, below, and on either hand, the mystic dance of worlds, ten thousand times ten thousand mighty globes in swiftest motion, but in perfect method, crossing and recrossing one another's path without collision, testify to the sublime union of the material and visible universe. Even the seemingly lawless meteors and the erratic comets are but more dazzling demonstrations of the same eternal truth.

It is said by some one, that all nature is at war ; but it is a superficial remark. More truly may we say, all nature is at peace, and her seeming conflict is but the condition of a more absolute harmony, and her very variety makes the real universe. It is different notes in music that constitute the perfect melody ; and the endless changes, revolutions, and, to our dull ears, discords of the creation, are in truth a more concordant anthem of praise to the Creator.

“ All nature is but art, unknown to thee ;
All chance, direction which thou canst not see ;
All discord, harmony not understood ;
All partial evil, universal good.”

And could we read *the moral* as clearly as we can the physical creation, we should no doubt see the same law, if not the same fact, in every part of its complicated web. We should know that evil and good, light and darkness, misery and happiness, were as essential and unavoidable in a world of free,

moral, accountable, and improvable agents, as the changes of matter and the compensations of growth and decay, combination and dissolution, from a glow-worm to a planet. At least, we cannot get away from one fact. It is the world of God. He made it, and not we ourselves. He created its beings, established its laws, and foresaw, if he did not predestinate, its evil and its good. But we must not judge the architect's work half done. We must "the great issue wait," and not suppose, that, because we see trouble to-day, we see the character and meaning of the whole unbounded plan of our Heavenly Father. For it is but a minute arc of the circle of eternity, crooked, indeed, and unsightly to the mole eye of man, but harmony and beauty itself to the all-comprehending Mind.

In fact, *the theory of Christianity* agrees perfectly with this view, and *the specific teachings* of our Lord corroborate it. What we know not now, we are to know hereafter. The tares cannot be pulled out from among the wheat until the harvest. The very Prince of Peace came to send forth on the earth a temporary sword, a transition-fire, to make way for a more entire union of soul with soul, and of the finite with the Infinite. The old stubble must be burnt up, to prepare the soil for a new and more abundant increase. The Church itself would prove a cause of contention for the time being, and Christianity a question of dispute, but only that in the end they might fulfil the conditions of a more lasting

peace. The probe and the knife must precede the perfect cure. The religion that was cradled amid crucifixions and martyrdoms could not grow to its complete maturity in the earth without its Inquisitions and Smithfields. Thus unity of faith, and even of opinions, has a meaning, if we would reverently heed it. Men struggle to be at one, not only in feeling but in doctrine. They break the peace for peace' sake. He must have read the history of the Christian Church to little good purpose, who does not see that its strifes have a deeper meaning than mere strife; and that, with clangor of hammer and saw, — with the splitting, cutting, and fashioning of this celestial, as of our familiar earthly architecture, — the world has been seeking, almost unconsciously to itself, to frame and build the harmonious temple of Christ.

The final issue, whatever may come between, is revealed by the Master, — “that they may be made perfect in one.” This union and perfection of religion, so illustrated by the works and so confirmed by the word of God, has two natural branches.

The final end of the Gospel is to make man one with God. The great work of Christ was to bring about this union. He was the medium of communication between heaven and earth, the Mediator between God and man, standing midway, like the angel in the beautiful design of the sculptor, who is pointing, with upward finger, the wondering infant, released from earth, to a brighter world on high. The relig-

ious acts our Saviour inculcated all subserved this main purpose. Did he teach repentance, faith, love, obedience, gratitude, prayer? They were the means and instrumentalities of removing the barriers to the perfect union; they were the filaments to weave a stronger and more incorruptible bond of harmony.

This state of perfect reconciliation with the Father of our spirits and Dispenser of our lot has been the aspiration and effort of the good and wise in the past, "the sacramental host of God." Indeed, more attention has been given to this side of religion, piety, than to the other side, morality. The exertion has been to be just *with* God, more than to be just *to* man.

But a profound want of our nature is met by union with God. We find nothing mystical or absurd in the sympathy of heart with heart; why should we in the concord of the humblest mind on earth with the Great Spirit? And if new light and power flow from the interchange of thought with thought, and intercourse among men, then how much greater must be the benefit to the ignorant and erring child of the earth to be brought into a living union with the Supreme Mind! The very term *religion*, as some derive it, signifies this *binding again* of the soul, that has drifted away from God, to its eternal strength. For life away from him is, in reality, not life, but a species of death. Not to know and love him is not to know and love truly anything he has made, not even ourselves. Our very self-love

will be actual self-hatred and self-ruin, unless the blessing of this higher relationship be recognized and sought.

Observe, this must be a living union; not a traditional and legendary conversion, effected many years ago,—our Christian character justifying itself by that single transaction,—but an ever-renewed alliance and good understanding; the most lively sorrow following every fall from the high estate of this divine intimacy. To-day, if we will, we may hear God in the rushing rain, and see him in the bountiful harvest. This present moment in which we dwell is full of him. Earth and air and ocean cover our board with royal generosity, and the mighty sun has spent the summer in ripening our desert. If the lowest things of life have tongues thus to speak to us of the All-surrounding Love, what shall we say of the highest,—of thought and fancy and feeling,—of art and science and literature,—of government, laws, and morals,—of the Holy Scriptures and the Gospel of Jesus Christ? The whole creation, physical, mental, and spiritual, has in truth been constructed to bring us into contact with God at every point, to impart to the mind the light, and to pour into the heart the life, of this blessed union. Consider its honor. This co-working with God, as dear children, is the chief privilege of man. What folly, what insanity, that we should so often and willingly forfeit it by our sins! There is no pride nor haughtiness with the Most High. He

condescends to an infant as to a Socrates, and abides with all his glory equally in the cottage or the palace which is opened to him. He has made man, as it were, a humble image of himself, a miniature of the Infinite. He calls upon his child to resemble him by choice, as he is formed to resemble him by creation; and to grow, as he has been made, in the divine life and similitude. He has thus imparted to man even a portion of his own creative power, and the satisfaction of being in part self-made.

By a true and close union with our Father in heaven, we are not lost in him, absorbed, and deprived of the consciousness and identity of our being; but it is in this manner we truly find our life, and come to ourselves; it is thus that the meek, the spiritually-minded, own and enjoy all things, enter into possession of the whole universe, inherit earth and inherit heaven; while he who is out of God and this filial oneness, however rich he may seem to be, has nothing, is disinherited of all, because he is not rich towards God. Everything refuses its use to him, because he does not use and enjoy all in God. "His riches are corrupted, his garments moth-eaten, his gold and silver cankered."

When we separate ourselves from the central Mind and Heart of the creation, we put ourselves into false relations with all things and beings; but when we maintain an unbroken communion of worship, love, and obedience, we place ourselves in such a conjunction that all things work together for our good,



and none for our ill ; the least swell into generous bounties, and the hardest soften into parental benedictions ; — yea, pain and grief have sweet uses to the child of God.

And when something worse comes, when the foul blot of sin threatens to eclipse the light of the soul for ever, how does this forgiving Parent meet us a great way off, even in our earliest compunctions and penitence, and give us no reluctant welcome home, but say, “ This my son was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost, and is found ” ! O the mercy and long-suffering of God ! Eternity will be too short to understand the instances of his care, and to sum up the multitude of his kindnesses.

Let us set about making this filial union a most practical and daily business of our lives. It is one of the greatest ends for which we have our lives given and preserved. God is a spirit ; but so are our friends spirits. That characteristic is no bar to our sympathy with them ; indeed, it is its very foundation. We can talk to them. But we can hold the higher conversation of prayer with the Heavenly Friend. They can answer us. True ; and poor and imperfect enough their answers often are, — smiles on false cheeks, — perhaps tears from fond, but foolish eyes, — half-stammered meanings of the soul, at the best. But the answers of God are great words of providence and grace, that we never can wholly forget or mistake, because they are always perfectly true and sincere. They are cherubim, standing in the sun ; crosses,

inscribed with encouraging mottoes, on the sky; bushes, burning with a divine, but unconsuming flame; now the birth-angel and now the death-angel crossing the threshold of our home; new influxes of light and new visitings of love. God speaks to us with such words as these. Have we failed to study even the alphabet of that language which makes them as articulate to us as our vernacular tongue?

Union with God! He in us and we in him, through his Son and his Spirit! He in us by his fullness of temporal good and spiritual blessing; we in him by our contented dependence and unquestioning love! We will see him in all things, and all things in him. We will hear him in the bird of spring and the fall of the autumn leaf. He condescends from his infinite heavens to dwell in the souls of his children. We will arise from our low and worldly life, from the dark places where we shut out from us the pure light and joy of the spirit-world, and enter into union with God, even with our God.

But thus far only the half has been said; the other privilege and duty of our being is *union with man*. "Perfect in one" applies to men with men, as to all men with God.

The ancient St. Simon Stylites dwelt thirty-seven years on the tops of pillars in the open air, exposed to all the rain and cold and heat, that he might crucify the body by this lingering martyrdom, and be perfectly joined to the Divine Being. He had his reward. He was called holy, saint, and many down

to this day think he was a very good man, though in a great error. But his name is never mentioned in the habitations of sin and poverty as a benefactor, as a son of consolation, who clothed the naked, fed the hungry, visited the prisoner, and comforted the sick. However faithful his struggle and his self-sacrifice to be one with God, he lost the other blessedness of being one with mankind.

But it is not sufficient to have a filial piety; our Lord also teaches us a fraternal morality. When he said, "Love thy God," he did not forget to add, "Love thy neighbor." He showed what the world did not believe, and what his own followers to this day find it a great stretch of faith to credit, that there is never any real opposition of men's interests one with another. That the good of one is the good of all, and the injury of one the injury of all. That no man liveth and no man dieth to himself. That so far as, by envy, anger, or pride, we cut ourselves off from the sympathies of the great whole of humanity, we lose a part of the substantial good of our being. We voluntarily withdraw ourselves, by so doing, from the ample range and spacious mansion assigned for our abode, and consent to take up our quarters in narrow and mean apartments. When we give to party, or sect, or clan, what was meant for all mankind, we so far dwarf and dethrone our whole nature. We cannot afford to lose the good-will of a single member of the human family. We are bound to do all we can, without giving up our convictions

of truth and duty, to preserve a kindly understanding with all men as men, as our brethren, as dear to the Heavenly Parent.

No theory of government, no plan of social organization, no mode of education, and no administration of religion, can hope to succeed in benefiting men, that is not based on the Christian view of their nature, and does not uphold the Christian morality. Too long has the state been esteemed as all in all, and the individual as little or nothing. Too long has the Church joined with the tyrant in pouring contempt on human nature. "Honor all men" stands against all these usurpations, as the bulwark of man's rights. The human soul is the greatest thing on earth. It transcends all cultures, or races, or colors. Mankind are one. They are of one origin, one nature, one interest, and one destiny. All slaveries, therefore, are cruelties in the family; all wars, murders under the same roof. And whatever harms one, with the certainty of gravitation harms all. The life of humanity is one. And every drop of blood unjustly shed, every wrong and oppression and cruelty, is treason against the majesty of the race, against the life and peace and virtue of unnumbered and innumerable millions. And not one individual can live so remote or sequestered a life as not to feel for better or for worse the influence of the mighty whole. No people, however lifted up to heaven in point of power or privilege, can long flourish in hostility to the liberties and peace of the rest of the world.

Proud Babylon may exalt herself, but Babylon must one day lie as low as the humblest village she ever laid waste with fire and sword. Imperial Rome may flaunt her glories before high Heaven; but against the queen of the earth, too, is written decline and downfall.

Through the medium of bread and tea and politics, we are interested in Ireland and China and Circassia; much more, through the all-diffusive sentiment of human brotherhood, we are concerned for every land, however remote, for every tribe, however barbarous. In this unity of the race and of man, in this fraternity of the nations alone, can any one people attain to its highest prosperity and happiness. One air enwraps the whole globe, and one sun shines every day upon all. Nature teaches us the identity of human interests; and the Gospel, with a sublime generalization, pronounces the multifarious races bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, and sinks in one impartial love the inequalities of Jew and Gentile, bond and free.

Peace would be but one of the fruits of the union of man with man; for peace, as generally understood and practised, has been but a species of armed neutrality. If men have forborne to work one another ill, they have neglected, in this false doctrine of selfishness, this short-sighted and temporary policy and so-called expediency, to work one another good. Civilized and Christian society, too, has often been only a milder type of civil war; class against

class, church against church, and town against town. The day when men shall be made perfect in their social union and coöperation has not yet arrived. But the commandments of Christ have not spent their vital force. They are the word of the day, and of all days. They contain the germs of a new civilization, as much superior to life in England or America as that exceeds the brutality of New Zealand. The heavenly laws, "Love thy neighbor as thyself," and "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them," embody the lofty ideal of a new morality; as the command, "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," inculcates a perfect piety.

The true disciple of Christ, therefore, or he who wishes for the true perfection and happiness of his being, will study to be *at one* with his Heavenly Father, and to be *at one* with his earthly brethren. This is the true *at-one-ment* and reconciliation, not in the dead letter of an antiquated theology, but in the living and life-giving spirit of divine truth. Jesus came to unite man with man, and man with God, and all real progress of his religion will exhibit this result. He lived and died for this cause. The song at his birth was peace; and his farewell blessing was peace.

And when we strive after the earnest communion of the finite with the Infinite in a humble and confiding piety, and after perfect love in every human relation, all other difficulties are in the way of being

quickly solved. When these two pillars stand, the whole social and spiritual fabric is safe. No lasting grief can root itself in a nature that is daily passing into the life of these magnanimous sentiments. The solid gloom of a sceptic misanthropy, a stoical contempt, or an atheistic indifference whether God rule above or man sin and suffer below, fly like the morning mist before the rising sun. This human and divine union is the solvent for all sins and all sorrows. It has the promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come.

What a blessing would descend upon families if this union were cherished! What a glory would invest the nations, if they would regard themselves but as greater families of God! What a sublime blessedness would rest on the whole moral earth, if, like the material, it were bound in everlasting gravitation to its great centre, and revolved in unconflicting harmony with its own system!

There has been a Greek Church of Christ, but it has partaken largely of the old mysteries and mythologies that went before it on the same soil. There has been a Roman Church of Christ, but it has had in it a great deal more of Cæsar than of God. There has been an English Church of Christ, but its hierarchy of principalities and powers has savored strongly of the dark and feudal ages. There have been Lutheran and Calvinistic Churches of Christ, but they have embodied and preserved with fossil permanency the errors and whims of individual

and erring men. Let there arise, then, a Universal Church of Christ, a new and holier fabric, partaking of the spirit of "Liberty, Holiness, Love"; the creation of a new world; large and equal and practical; adequate to the age in which we live, and all ages; combining love to God and love to man, piety and morality, faith and works, religion and philanthropy, in bonds never to be broken. For such a Church, to come out of the present dismembered and fragmentary condition of Protestant Christendom, let us pray with faith, and labor with zeal, and God may yet grant to our prayers and labors a glorious fulfilment.

DISCOURSE XI.



THE BIRTH OF JESUS.

BUT WHEN THE FULNESS OF THE TIME WAS COME, GOD SENT FORTH HIS SON. — Galatians iv. 4.

THE birth of the Saviour of mankind is an event fit to be observed with a perpetual celebration. The poets have wreathed for it their most graceful garlands of song, devotion has uttered her most ardent prayers of gratitude, custom and tradition have accumulated their venerable associations, and reform and philanthropy centre here their brightest hopes for the world. For here is the last, best gift of God. When he had poured out all his treasures of wisdom, power, and beneficence, in the ordinary methods of earth, air, seas, stars, and vegetable and animal and human life, he gave as it were himself at last to the immortals he would educate for eternal life. He crowns Nature with Providence, and Providence with Revelation, and earth with heaven, and opens an ever better and higher good to the ceaseless ascent of the human mind. He who planted in us an eternal aspiration, has not failed in giving it an eternal supply.

When the angel said to the shepherds, who were sore afraid at the glory which shone round about them, "Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people," he pronounced the word of all time:—Joy, that a Saviour was born, that the Heavenly Father gave a new and brighter token, in the advancing race, of his exhaustless mercy,—joy, that hope, not fear, love, not hatred, happiness, not misery, life, not death, was to be the rule and destiny of man;—joy, that the fulness of time had come, that mankind were prepared for the new age, that the expectations of many generations were to be fulfilled, that the year of jubilee had come, the year of years, and the age of ages.

Let, then, joy be the key-note. Why, when God designs to do the greatest good to man, should he be so dismal and abject in receiving it? Let the king's son receive the king's gift in a kingly manner. Be children happy in their way, for it is nature's lyric of exultation for the Christ child, the Kriss Kringle, in the beautiful German diminutive. Be manhood happy in its expanded strength, for there is an intenser joy and a serener peace in Christ the man. Be old age joyful, too, for though that was a period Jesus never lived, yet he has left for it its sufficient consolation in the decline of bodily powers by the ingrafting of a life ever fresh and youthful, the life of truth, love, hope, faith, peace; a life that has no "sere and yellow leaf" to its mellow autumn, no ice and frost to its dying winter. The Puritans rejected

Christmas, because they were afraid of even a shred or rag of the scarlet woman of Rome, or what they deemed her twin-sister of England. But their great poet, Milton, sang its glories and joys in one of the finest lyrics in the language; and as time has sped, its commemoration has been increased every year among their descendants.

Humanity asleep, and lying almost at death's door, wakes up slowly, but it does awake, and arises at last, and shakes itself, and goes forth to its labor and work until the evening. In the first ages of the Church, the effect of Pagan and Jewish customs of thousands of years is observable in all the ceremonies and great days of the Church. The elements still cling to the body and form of existing Christianity, and have some foothold in nearly every religious body. But because our fathers Judaized or Paganized, there is no occasion for us to unhumanize ourselves. The fruit is not the soil, but the fruit must grow in the soil to come to perfection. And the tree of Christianity, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations, had its rooting and first growth in beggarly elements, and three or four centuries after his ascension, Jesus would not have known his own Church;—he might find it difficult even now.

But the tendency of Protestantism, and of Unitarianism, the Protestantism of Protestantism, is too much to denial and neglect of the concrete, bodily form of the Gospel. It substitutes reasons for feelings, and convictions for faith. Many of the Protes-

tant churches leave the record of Christ's life for intellectual creeds, as the Greek and Romish Churches do for sensuous rites. But Christianity has a concrete side as well as an abstract. Its Founder was very nigh to man, as he was very nigh to God. His principles were divine, but his agents were human. He eat, drank, slept, walked, was weary, conversed, worshipped, used the words of his day, worked events, scenes, birds, lilies, into his discourse, came not to destroy the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfil, to attempt not to sweep away all existing usages and opinions, but to graft in a new life on the stock,—that when that which was perfect was come, then that which was in part might be done away. Hence he attended the synagogue worship, while he led men to a higher worship. He was a Jewish Messiah, and yet a universal Saviour. All the little joys, pleasures, connections, and kindly sympathies of our race, he treated with delicacy and respect. The child he did not overlook, the beggar he called and healed. He talked as affably with the Samaritan woman at the well, as with Nicodemus, the member of the national Sanhedrim. So thoroughly immersed and pervaded was he with all the charities, usages, and sentiments of his day, while he rose above them all in his glorious faith of the Fatherhood of God, and the brotherhood of man.

And we still need the concrete, historical, and traditional, for we are flesh and blood, not spirit and ether. The great days of the Church are days of

high sentiments, as are those of the State. Christmas, the memory of the birth, Easter, the memory of the resurrection of the Lord, are as natural to keep for piety, as the 22d of February, the day of Washington's birth, and the 4th of July, the day of Independence, are for patriotism. And he would succeed as little who should attempt to eliminate the essence of love of country out of all forms, and preserve it living and commanding in a pure abstraction, as he who should discard all religious institutions, and resolve the hallowed days, places, and persons all back into the disembodied sentiments from which they emerged. Philosophy can talk to us of truth, but it is in the cold, dry light of reason. It is the office of religion to incarnate truth in love; to show us truth, but truth living, warm, and vivifying; to reveal, not the intellect, but the heart of God; to lead us up from this eternal and fruitless chase after the abstract and interior essence of things, to that mighty and conscious centre of the universe, where we and all things have our being. We want philosophy, that is, truth, the reality of things, but it would be good for nothing without love, for only that can be good which has a good purpose and springs from love. Truth in love is the highest point we can attain. Then we are armed in the mind, and armed in the heart, unto every emergency. Nothing can go beyond or get round truth in one, and love in the other, — truth for extent, and love for quality, the two poles of our being, holding all things midway, continent and ocean.

It is a healthy symptom, then, when the faith of the moral and spiritual Christ, the Christ of human consciousness, is most pure and growing, that the observances and honors of the historical Christ should be green and flourishing;—that the birth of Christ, his death, his ascension, should be kept in lively and impassioned remembrance;—that the poet should give his hymn, and the speaker his address;—that joy should hold her festival, and pathos and gratitude sing a jubilant and triumphant strain.

The birth of Jesus,—Son of Man in the flesh, Son of God in the spirit,—born not of the will of the flesh, or the will of man,—befalling in the fulness of time, when the world had exhausted its own philosophies and experiments, and was ready for a new advance,—a birth so heralded and preannounced,—so taking place,—a manger for a cradle, a stable for a nursery, angels for choristers, and shepherds for attendants and messengers,—wise men from the East with their gifts, and holy Simeon and Anna of the temple, prophet and prophetess, with their benedictions, for godfathers and godmothers,—the birth so obscure contrasted with the office so transcendent,—so humble a child rising to be the leader at thirty years of the human race, not in lower matters, but in the highest,—in the art and conduct of life, in the relation of man to the Infinite and the Eternal;—here is cause of wonder, and joy, and gratitude, if we were only spectators of the scene; how much more when we have part and lot in the same,—when his truth is our truth,

his love our love, when he conquers a rude and unvanquished part of nature and time for us, and gives us the victory over evil and the fear of death, and imparts to his followers the freedom and citizenship of the universe and of immortality !

History has been called philosophy teaching by example ; but a history is just as much religion, as philosophy, teaching by example. History, indeed, would seem more fit in its scenes and passions to teach love than truth, religion than philosophy. There are those who object to the call for faith in the historical Christ, who place their faith in the Christ within them, the Christ of consciousness, the sentiments and affections of their higher nature. But unless this faint and effaced handwriting on their souls had been brought to the fire of the living and dying Christ, what distinct moral lines, well-ordered alphabet and language of spiritual truth and love, should we have discerned in those whose natures are now luminous with the light and heat of spirituality. Patriotism is a great sentiment, and we cannot spare it, but neither can we spare the Washingtons and Sydneys and Hampdens who illustrate it. Plato can write of the New Atlantis, or the Fortunate Isles, and Harrington portray a Republic of the fabled Oceana, and Sir Thomas More one of Utopia ; but one incarnated Washington, one incarnated America of Free Institutions, does more to rouse the energies of mankind for practical emancipation and deliverance from the tyrannies of

the earth, than all the labors of the wise and learned, when they range the field of fiction and philosophic ideality.

As a form of teaching, history never tires. We read and re-read the lives of men for the hundredth time, and always from a new position. For they are living; they go to the root of the matter; they solve the practical difficulty, they cut the Gordian knot, they face the evil, the danger, the fear; they conquer. New histories, new lives, are written of the oldest times and men, and they are always interesting, always instructive, provided only they are told in a new and truer vein than before, with a more interior vision, a more face to face and daguerreo-typed likeness, with a deeper or more charitable construction of motives; for example, Niebuhr and Arnold write of Rome; Grote, of Greece; Kenrick, of Egypt; Layard, of Nineveh; Carlyle, of Mahomet, Saxon England, and Frederic the Great. To this field belongs this wonderful history of Christ. And every new-comer takes a new point of view to survey the fulness and perfection of Jesus. Thomas à Kempis, Scougal, Fénelon, Woolman, Ware, Furness, — some higher and some lower, but a new biography each time is given, written in word, or lived in character.

In this sense, history is inexhaustible and untiring. A good history of England, of America, is ever the latest, last want, and write well as one may, Hume, Smollet, Bancroft, Hildreth, his neighbor always cometh and searcheth him out, gains a new vantage-

ground, makes his facts tell a better tale, rises to higher and broader principles, and settles long disputed questions on new grounds of evidence, or the results of society.

So has the history of Christianity, and the life of its Author, and of his Apostles, to be studied long, and from new points of view, and in different modes of mind, and in varying stages of society, before we see all the riches of this volume, all the laws, motives, principles, influences, and tendencies that branch forth from the Christ. Men before thought they had done much in this sphere, but when Luther comes, or Swedenborg or Neander writes, or Butler, the Christian world can never be as it was before; even the life of all lives is seen through an altered medium and atmosphere of our own minds. This study of the history of Christ and his religion is a great desideratum; it is too much neglected, and when attended to, is not always pursued with right views and purposes.

The glory of the Gospel is not simply in itself, considered abstractly from all human society, but also in its multiplied, heaven-designed adaptations. Its historical, traditional character is one of these. It has its lives with other lives, its heroes with other heroes, though different in character, its biographies and letters and discourses with other biographies, letters, and discourses. We can easily conceive of this truth having been communicated in other ways, and, if man were endowed with intellect alone, ways

equally efficient as the present. The truth might have been traced in blazing and ever-burning characters along the over-arching sky, or painted on the leaves of the forest, or muttered in the rippling brook, or sounded abroad by the thunder. For in all these ways are not lessons continually taught us, and it needed but a step more to teach still more and better ones, a yet livelier wisdom, a warmer love, a more articulate and impressive purpose of the benignant Father of all? But not so have we been made, and not so does he, who knows what we are and will be, treat us. We are beings of will, power of choice, affections, motives. And we wanted, in order to be persuaded in our heart of hearts of the infinite loveliness of virtue, not a cold revelation lettered on the sky, not a brighter sun, not a softer moon, not sweeter music of bird, waterfall, or sighing winds, or ocean's haughty roar, but we needed inexpressibly a revelation of living warmth, spoken by living lips, gushing up from places too deep for tears, and too sacred for aught but the holy eye of God, and acted, toiled, wept, suffered, agonized, and ecstasized out, as ours is, from day to day, through all this wondrous life of man on the earth. Such is Jesus, as he appears before us in that simple record of the Gospels. Say what men may of the credibility of the books, and their genuineness and authenticity, there is the problem, — if such a being as Jesus had not existed, they would have been eminently miraculous who fabricated such a character, and

agreed in it, as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John have done in the four Gospels and the Acts, and Paul, James, Peter, and John in the Epistles and Revelation. While, if we admit that Jesus did live, just as we admit without a question that Cæsar or Epaminondas lived, then all is clear and satisfactory; sufficient causes are assigned for the events which followed, and the Christ of history became just as real, and in one sense we may say as natural a being, as the Socrates or the Cicero of history.

This historical belief I am far from presenting to you as the all in all of Christian faith. We may believe that Homer lived, and not care particularly what he thought about Jupiter, or taught about revenge, or slander, or hypocrisy, or any other vice. But Jesus enters into personal relations. He says, Thou. He pricks the conscience. He moves the heart. He knocks at the door. His kingdom is not of this world, — guards, palaces, power, fame, sword, or sceptre he had none; his royal domain is within, — the field of thought, the world of spiritual being, the sphere of motives, — the decisions of conscience, the rise and fall of this sensitive, throbbing breast, the outlook of this quick, anxious, foreseeing spirit, — all this — and how much it is, pent up in the walls of this little frame! — is the territory which this pacific Conqueror comes to take possession of, and make his own, and change the wild jungle of nature into the well-ordered and fruitful field, — what is sour sweeten, what is barren enrich, what is crooked straighten, what is weak strengthen and vivify.

And there is no length of wild fanaticism, or stupid and brutal ignorance, or set bigotry, or bloody persecution, or sanguinary wars, to which not the world, but the disciples of the benign Jesus, might not revert, and persist in, were it not for the new reckoning we can take at any time to correct these observations, by applying to the Gospels. These are the compass and needle, quadrant and practical navigator. In dark ages, "when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared," — in tumultuous and agitated periods, when "no small tempest lay on us," and all hope that the world could be saved was taken away, — this is the pole-star to correct our voyage, an observation of the sun which by computation can steer us aright on the most boisterous sea.

Men are very low, and they are to be raised very high. We must not be dainty how we help them, and use only our conceited methods. We seize what is at hand, a rope, a pole, to lift a man out of a well, or save him from the river. It is very idle in us to say that such and such institutions are not worthy of God, as if he did not use all institutions and influences to mould and dye and fashion and season and temper his human handiwork, — cold, heat, work, play, father, mother, brother, sister, lover, the loss and gain, the joy and the grief, the evil and the good, school, academy, and university of his mighty world. Why not prophet and priest, Moses and Christ, tabernacles and incense, a little bread and wine, a written book, religious rites, a few drops of water, a

few syllables in the ear, a kneeling posture, a closed eye, an uplifted heart, a murmured prayer, a harmony of sound, hours and days, the Christmas and the Easter, the hallelujahs of the angels, and the ejaculations of the cross? Life is buried in the concrete, — we are walking flesh and bones. Why not suppose religion would share in the same law of all our powers and affections, — would be symbolized, materialized, illustrated, exemplified, commemorated, and that, however humble the details, — be it the hem or the rings of the tabernacle, or the elements of the Supper, or the posture of worship, — all would borrow dignity and grace, however lowly they might be in human apprehension, from the infinite grandeur of the end they are to subserve. The posts and iron wires are rather a blemish than otherwise, which follow our roads, and disfigure the landscape, but then they carry the lightning. And nothing is small, nothing is mean or despicable, that carries light, though it be but a single ray, to an immortal soul. The subject, the end, dignifies, greatens, glorifies the alphabet or the multiplication-table of moral, as of mental training, — and all the loftiest souls of glory and of God could remember when they began with cradle hymns, and evening prayers, until they caught the ethereal essence of devotion, and could join cherub and seraph in their life of truth and life of love.

Hail, then, to all the diversified means by which we receive our Christian nurture! We cannot de-

spise, or spare one. The Bible would be a very dull book, if they who are evil were not put in, as well as the good. We have to use no caution lest our youth will copy Jezebel or Judas. It would be a most unnatural book, if there were not in it the flashings-up of the ill-pent fires of anger, and the blasting flames of lust, — for this is human life; and how can the heaven-ascending sentiments begin, except on the lowly floor of man's present abode? Hail, then, to the earthen vessel which holds the diviner treasure! The water would be spilled were it not for the pitcher of the woman at the well. Hail to the blessed Christmas! Grant that the word is bad, — *Christmas*, the mass of Christ, — Papal terms; grant that the precise day, and even the precise year, are unknown, that folly and superstition have often ruled the usage, or that even now there is more powder than piety, more show and extravagance and merry-making than are compatible with the birth celebration of the lowly Redeemer, who had not where to lay his head, from the manger, his first resting-place, to the cross, his last. But who would give it up? Who would not feel an appalling absence if the birthday of the Saviour were made a common day back again? Who can calculate the refined and hallowed associations that have entwined themselves around the youthful spirit, and made his Saviour real to him? Who can see the crowd of happy faces around a Christmas-tree, in expectancy of the coming gift plucked from its branches, or the eager and happy

crowds, for once free, pouring through the streets, or listen to the hearty salutations of young and old, and not feel that merry, happy, joyful spirits inspired the hour, and that it is something to associate for ever with the Gospel and its opening day on the world, gladness, and gratitude, and gifts, and generosity to the poor, and remembrance of friends, and burial of old grudges, and the concluding year, illuminated, and transfigured by a burst of lyrical pleasure, — joy at home, joy in the Church, joy in society, joy in the spirit? For once we will give wings to our devotion, and spurn the dull clog of our labor, our prudence, and our fear; we will sing the angels' song, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men." We will bring myrrh, frankincense, and gold, if not to him, the chief, yet to his little ones, whom he loved and blessed, and of whom he once was. All thanks that faith in him is no chill and solitary act, no cold assent and hard intellectual conviction, but emotional, lyrical, affectionate, — that it stands not in the midst of the utter desolation of all the finer and more child-like sentiments, memories, graces, and joys, but is to be wreathed around with all manner of kindly sympathies, happy memories, and happier hopes, bright and golden associations, made of earth, but colored and prismaticized from heaven! Kriss Kringle the child will plant a seed in the heart that Christ the King will ripen into immortal fruits. Why despise the lowest rounds of the ladder on which we climb to our heavenly destiny?

And while the falling sands of the year tell us once again that our life is swift and irrevocable,—

“Blazing a moment, then sunk in night,”—

a point between the eternities,— how needful and happy it is, that, when we might sink down in despair of ever being or doing any good, this cheery and hope-inspiring festival comes to tell us in so many words to be of good cheer, and “hope on, hope ever,” for there was once a Christ on earth, friend of ours and every human soul, and there is ever a Christ in heaven, kind, holy, and beautiful!

DISCOURSE XII.



THE THREEFOLD CHRIST.

AND WE BELIEVE AND ARE SURE THAT THOU ART THAT CHRIST,
THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD. — John vi. 69.

THE glad occasion of our annual commemoration of the birth of our Lord and Saviour has again returned.

“It was the winter wild,
While the heaven-born child
All meanly wrapped in the rude manger lies.”

Many circumstances, upon which we have heretofore dwelt at this service of Christmas, gave a tender and pathetic charm to that ancient night at Bethlehem. But what lends its chief interest to all celebrations of the Author of our Faith, whether, as now, of his birth, or, as at the Supper, of his death, is that he was, as “we believe and are sure, the Christ, the Son of the living God.” He came forth, in a sense different from that of any other being, from the bosom of the Infinite Father. That eminent fact alone is worth an eternal jubilee of gratitude. Could we have a proper feeling of such a gift, from such a

Giver, the fountains of the great deep within us would be broken up, and we should require no exhortation to pour out our whole souls in praise and joy. That the Most High should condescend to the lowest, a Holy God to his sinful creatures, that heaven should bow to earth, dark, guilty earth, this is mercy, this is love. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

The illustrious messenger commissioned for our salvation may be viewed in three relations and aspects to us, as the Christ of Prophecy, the Christ of History, and the Christ of Experience. This threefold survey will help us in grouping our meditations and aiding our memories. Each point, too, will furnish independent matter for faith and for thankfulness.

I. *The Christ of Prophecy.* This world, as constituting the initiatory state of our being, relates more directly to the body. It gives food to our hunger, clothing and shelter to our nakedness, and tasks for our muscles. Hence it is liable to tyrannize over that part of us which is not fed by any bread, clothed with any garments, or tasked by any labors, limited to time and sense. To bring, then, the spiritual world into action upon our spiritual nature, as this world is brought into action upon our bodily nature, seems to be the problem proposed in all religions. To reveal the Creator to his creatures; to introduce

God into this state of existence, and make men feel nigh to Him ; to render the children of time sensible of the powers of the world to come, — has been the mission of every true prophet and teacher. Men all over the earth have yearned after God. The pilgrims have travelled far, and sank down on the desert sands, in search of their Father. The poets have borne this burden on their harmonious numbers. Hermits have dwelt in caves, that, where the noise of the world was shut out, they might hear the still, small voice. Sacrifices have been as universal as the fire that consumed them. Humanity can adopt with historical truth the words of the Psalmist, “My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.” And Christ, as the counterpart to this wide-spread and deep-seated need, may be said to be the object of a species of blind prediction by all the sages of the heathen world, as he was of a clear prophecy by the Jewish seers.

Man, though specially a creature of reason, has, nevertheless, his instincts. He is not wholly made up of cool calculation and deliberate judgment. A vast and varied nature flames within his clay. He is of “every creature’s best.” The animals share with him of their passions and appetites, the cherubim have contributed their knowledge, and he has caught from the seraphim a spark of their love. As the bird, the fish, the beast, under the impulse and unerring guidance of their respective instincts, seek after their appropriate and congenial

good, so do certain instinctive faculties in man reach upward after what the Roman orator called "something immense and infinite." His trust and hope fly abroad out of this little cage of the body, and rise up singing even to heaven's gate. His love yearns and stretches itself after something lovelier and dearer than it has ever yet experienced or possessed. Pile mountains of superstition upon this human nature, and, like the giant, it will heave the whole mass, and throw up smoke and ashes, if no clear fire, from the deep centre of the volcano. For take the lapse of ages, take the myriads of the race, and we see certain general and uniform movements towards a higher religion, as much as towards a higher civilization. Here it may be arrested, and there it may be beaten back; but the reactions are but side-eddies in the stream, the general current is onward. There is enough to be seen even in the perverted religions of history, to convince us that Christ was, in the sacred language of the Bible, "the desire of all nations."

His coming was in accordance with the plan of God from the first; not an artifice to supply an unexpected failure, not an outward patch of new cloth upon an old garment, but as a part of its intrinsic texture, of its warp and its woof, did the mission of Jesus crown and complete the Divine counsels for the welfare of man. Thus there were "preparations," not only among the Jews, but in general history, for the birth of Christ. It took place at such a

period, in such a place, and under such circumstances, as were best adapted, not simply for the people of Judea, but for all kindreds, tongues, and nations. The human species had been allowed time to run through a variety of experiments in government, social life, and religion, fitted to produce humility and distrust of their own unaided ability to work out the life-problem.

In the language of Leland, "The Christian Revelation was made to the world at a time when it was most wanted, when the darkness and corruption of mankind were arrived at the height. If it had been published much sooner, and before there had been a full trial made of what was to be expected from human wisdom and philosophy, the great need men stood in of such an extraordinary Divine dispensation would not have been so apparent." The mighty nations of the old world had risen, declined, and fallen. Rome alone stood, but the film of age and decay already began to dim her eagle eye. Just at the era when her universal dominion had lulled for the instant the turbulence of mankind, and when a comparatively safe conduct would be given to the promulgators of the new faith, under Roman law and order, the moral King of the race began his reign. In Milton's noble words, —

"No war or battle's sound
Was heard the world around:
The idle spear and shield were high up hung;
The hooked chariot stood

Unstained with hostile blood ;
The trumpet spake not to the armed throng,
And kings sat still with awful eye,
As if they surely knew their Sovereign Lord was by.
But peaceful was the night,
Wherein the Prince of Light
His reign of peace upon the earth began."

He came as "a light to lighten the Gentiles," no less than as "the glory of his people Israel." And when shepherds of the chosen nation came to hail his birth, and angels from heaven "bowed their bright wings to a world such as this," and chanted, "Glory to God in the highest!" it was but a fit accompaniment to the other honors that wise men from the East, the Magians, the representatives of the heathen world, should come to honor him with their homage, and with their rich gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, whose need was felt in every land, and the desire and hope of whom might be said to smoulder darkly and deeply in every human bosom.

But the Christ who was blindly felt after by sage and seer, if haply they might find him, was the Christ of an assured prophecy in Judea. Abraham had seen his day, and was glad. Even earlier, to Adam and Noah the promise had gone forth. The Mosaic institutions were all prospective, not final. Their author foresaw the prophet which the Lord God would send. I need not cite texts which are familiar to you. You know the tenor of Isaiah and Daniel and the minor prophets. Some passages

may have been misrepresented and strained to make out an argument, but that Jesus was the object of prophetic faith and hope, I suppose can no more be denied, than that God was the object of worship. Every mother in the line of David coveted the honor of being the favored parent of so distinguished an offspring. The Jews were not, it is true, prepared to accept him in his twofold capacity of Son of God as well as Son of Man; they wanted him wholly as the Son of Man, as an earthly king. But the indistinct yearnings of humanity after a more open vision of God and a clearer revelation of human duty rose among the children of Israel to a prophetic certainty.

And if we ask for final causes, if we demand the uses of such yearnings and of such a certainty, it is enough to say that the dawn must come before sunrise. By the power of that "hope which springs eternal in the breast," the nations were led onward. God thus left not himself without witness in any nation. The anticipation of "the better time coming" shone down the long line of past generations, and cheered the hearts and strengthened the hands of those who toiled and taught, who suffered and died, for human liberty and happiness. In the lapse of four thousand years from the creation to the advent of the Saviour, many lessons had been learned that would not be forgotten, some of the ideas necessary to prepare the way of the Lord had gained a footing, and the fulness of the time had come when "the

Sun of Righteousness should arise with healing in his wings."

II. The way has now been prepared for the next step of our inquiry, as it respects *the Christ of History*. We have seen the general want, and the special prediction. How was that want met, and how was that prediction fulfilled? The heavenly messenger came. How did he live, teach, die? Did the Christ of History make good the Christ of Prophecy? If not according to fallible human judgment, and worldly, warlike views of Jewish doctors and lawyers, did his ministry bear the broad and unmistakable stamp of a divine authority, character, and spirit, such as it became a merciful and righteous Father to appoint and sanction, and such as it was fitting and beneficial that his alienated and erring creatures should receive?

And here we may pause for a moment to consider the fearful suspense with which the spectators of the youth and opening manhood of Jesus must have surveyed his career. The Protestant Church makes too little of the childhood of the Saviour, the holy family, the period of his youth, and the influences and preparations that were around him who was to be the Teacher of the world. The question might be with those higher spirits, who knew that our Lord was a free agent, Would he always be true to himself and to God? Would the Son of God keep from sinking into the mere Son of Man? Would the second Adam resist temptation more successfully

than did the first Adam ? Would he ever keep the path of rectitude and purity, and have occasion to sorrow only for the sins of others, never for his own ? Would he on all occasions, in the desert and in the garden, before the judgment-seat of Pilate, and on the cross of Calvary, "though tempted in all points like as we are, yet be without sin" ? What would be his words, what would be his deeds ? There were the infinite possibilities of virtue before him, but would he of all who had ever trod the earth keep the golden mean, shun the too little and the too much, and, amid the endless varieties of speech and action, act and live, teach and suffer and die, and still remain without spot or blemish, and be able to make the unanswerable appeal to his enemies,—
"Which of you convinceth me of sin ?"

In this pause of the spiritual world to behold the life of the Son of God on earth, may we not well suppose that they who sang of this birth would still bow from their seats of blessedness to witness his work ? So runs the record, that when the Devil left him in the wilderness, "angels came and ministered unto him"; and that when the dark shadows of Gethsemane gathered over his head, and "being in an agony, his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground," then and there "appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him." Moses, the founder, and Elijah, the restorer, of the Hebrew commonwealth and the religion of one God, appeared with him in the moun-

tain-top, when he was transfigured before the disciples, and the subject of their august conversation is stated to have been his decease soon to be accomplished at Jerusalem. How far or how near may be the confines of that mysterious dwelling-place of the spirit-world, is not for us to say. Enough to know that a mighty cloud of witnesses encompassed Him who came to save the world.

And when we turn from that anxiety how Christ would live, to how Christ did live, how glorious the reality beyond human power or expectation! We ejaculate with the Roman centurion, "Truly this was a righteous man; truly this was the Son of God." We asseverate with Simon Peter, "We believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Read the Gospels. There you see what the Christ of History was. There you follow his benevolent journeys from city to city, and from province to province. "He went about doing good." There you witness what wonderful works he did, and what sublime prophecies he uttered. It is true, there is no set portrait drawn of him by his disciples. No one was appointed to pronounce a funeral oration at his tomb. But undescribed, his character is best described. We sometimes obtain a truer insight into it by a slight incident, by some word he drops, than we should by pages of rhetorical effort. Here were no less than eight different writers speaking of Jesus, and his work, and his life, — Matthew, Mark, Luke,

John, Paul, James, Peter, and Jude, — and yet, though artless and uncultivated men to a great extent, how harmonious and identical is the impression they leave on our minds of the character of their Master! They never cross or contradict one another as to his spiritual features. It is the same heavenly face that beams upon us from the page of the loving John, the practical James, and the energetic Paul. The word *Jesus* suggests the same idea of character wherever it occurs, one and indivisible.

What combined simplicity and strength and sweetness must have been in a life that could make but one impression, and which, though placed before us often in fragments and independent actions, conveys a uniform idea! The infidel has often borne witness to its power, and whatever he may have said of the origin, authenticity, and genuineness of the Gospels, he has seldom brought any "railing accusation" against its spotless subject. He has generally respected Christ, however much he may have said against Christianity.

The different sects of Christians, though holding to diverse doctrines, have had little controversy as to the life of Jesus, and the spirit of his moral teachings. However they may have theorized about his nature, they could not but agree in one view of the dignity, beauty, and matchless perfection of his character. His love was too disinterested and transparent, his mercy too ample, his heavenly-mindedness too manifest, even for the narrowest to mis-

understand, or for the most contentious to dispute. Holy and beautiful life of the Son of God! The better we know it, the more we love and revere it. As long as we look upon its divine lineaments, we can never wholly fail in loving excellence, and living and hoping for heaven.

III. In the third and last place, we were to view *Christ* as he stands related to human *experience*, — what has been called sometimes, rather mystically, *the Christ of Consciousness*. This is the practical part of our subject. For little would it profit us to know that Jesus was predicted, or that he came and fulfilled his mission, if we have no personal interest in the message he bore, and the life he lived; if we have not experienced and actualized to some extent the truth for the mind, and the love for the heart, which he brought us from his Father and our Father. He was to a great degree himself the Revelation. Christ is Christianity. If we have realized what his religion is, we have so far realized what he is.

To show you that this view is not presented without authority, let us recount some of the more emphatic declarations of the New Testament. We shall thus see that the idea of a species of reproduction in ourselves of Christ, is no mysticism, but a plain Scripture doctrine. And we shall further see how worthless to us becomes the Christ of Prophecy, or the Christ of History, except he becomes also to us the Christ of Experience, of inward possession and joy.

“Yet a little while,” said Jesus to his disciples, “and the world seeth me no more, but ye see me ; because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.” Again, “If a man love me, he will keep my words ; and my Father will love him, and we will come and make our abode with him.” He also prays to God that his disciples may “be one even as we are one ; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfect in one.” In other connections he speaks of the same oneness with his followers, and his dwelling in them.

The Apostles advance in several passages the same idea. “My little children,” said Paul to the Galatians, “of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.” To the Corinthians he wrote : “Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’s sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.” He reiterates the same doctrine to the Ephesians : “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with the saints what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.” John also says : “And he that keepeth his commandment dwelleth in him, and he in him ; and

hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the spirit which he hath given us."

By all which it seems clearly to be meant, that there is an indwelling Christ in every true believer and disciple ; and that to cherish and to bring out in ourselves the Christ, should be our end and aim. For what was the Christ, but the Divine, the True, and the Good, embodied, incarnated in a perfect living being ; a personification of heaven on earth ; the kingdom of God fully come in one point ; the way shown in which God would live in the flesh, were God man ? And towards what do all the teachings, ordinances, and promises of the Gospel preponderate, but to renew — in humbler guise and lowlier types, it is true, but still to renew — the very same Divine, True, and Good which dwelt in Jesus, and which primarily dwelt in God ; to have the same mind in us which was also in Christ Jesus ; to see from his point of view that virtue is the one transcendent interest ; to be willing, like him, to sacrifice everything for it, though it were life itself ; to act from like motives ; to breathe a kindred spirit ; to do good, as he did, to all ; and to understand that this species of life, so far from being anything fanatical, ultra, absurd, impracticable, is the only rational, consistent, true, and practical method by which one can avoid wrecking both his temporal and eternal welfare ? That in very truth, without living such a life, and unfolding the latent features of the portrait of Christ which are imbedded invisibly in every human soul,

we do not live really as with the life of angels and of God, but we merely exist as with the life of animals, — eating, drinking, and sleeping, — or vegetate as with the life of the yet lower, inanimate creation. Is not this intelligible? and is it not all-important?

If there is anything obscure in this view to any mind, or, if not obscure, still unimpressive, it will be more plain if we take one rule for our guide. It is this, that we can only know another so far as we have in us what the other possesses; we can understand love only so far as we have loved; anger, so far as we have been angry; and so on through the catalogue of things good and things evil. In a word, we can know only so much as we are and as we do. All we really comprehend of humanity is by the development in ourselves of the human; of God and of Christ, by having the Godlike and the Christlike made real in us. “He that doeth the will of God shall know of the doctrine.”

The Christ of Prophecy was needful in his place, as the initiation of the comprehensive plan of the Almighty for his creatures' deliverance and life. The hope of the coming of some great being to aid man in his trials had its twilight even in the heathen mind. The day broke long before the sun rose above the horizon, while the patriarchs and prophets ascended the mount of God, and looked abroad over the more than earthly Canaan. But the benefits of the Christ of Prophecy to us are simply that they confirm our faith, and raise in us a more exalted idea

of the excellence of Him who was thus ordained from the foundation of the world, as much a part of the plan of the Creator as the ocean, the earth, or the sun.

The Christ of History, too, has passed away. He has ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, and is seated on the right hand of the power of God. All that now visibly remains to us of him is in certain parchments and paper leaves, recording his deeds and words, in certain histories of his life, certain laws, institutions, symbols. The earth will not again be pressed by his foot, no lilies will bloom before his spiritual eye, no birds again draw forth the superlative lesson of trust in Providence. Once for all he has lived, once for all he has died. His presence with his followers till the end of the world is a spiritual presence. His coming is his kingdom, not of this world, the reign of righteousness. His sceptre will ever remain his cross.

It is at this point that we see how the Christ of Experience is one with the Christ of History, as the Christ of History is one with the Christ of Prophecy. The three are one and the self-same being, only viewed under different relations. As the same Infinite Creator is contemplated from one position, and called the God of Nature; from another, and called the God of Providence; and from still another, and called the God of Grace. We thus gain more definite and impressive views both of Jesus and of our Heavenly Father.



There has been a tendency of late years to do injustice to the Christ of History and the Christ of Prophecy, and to insist too boldly and exclusively on the Christ of Experience or consciousness. But each and all are good in their place. We cannot subtract from or add to the plan of God. We cannot do without either. Each represents a great idea. Each commands an extensive section of the Divine scheme. Each appeals to central principles and affections in man. Prophecy stands related to hope, history to memory, and experience to affections and love and the realities of life. Into whatever pages of Heaven's record we look, we see that the finger of mercy has been there before us, and traced every line.

Especially is there a vital connection between the Christ of History and the Christ of Experience. All we have of the latter we must form on the model of, and import from, the former. The very standards of ancient virtue were false. They mixed the image to be worshipped with clay as well as gold. The Christ of the New Testament shows that the Jews erred widely of the mark when they made the Christ of the Old Testament, the Messiah, the Anointed One of God, a man of blood, a man after the old standard and pattern of heroism. The heroes of Greece and Rome, also, can be no heroes of the Christian kingdom, or but inferior ones, because self, external fame, passion, cruelty, and lust so often mingled strange fire even with their most costly sacrifices. Jesus created a new order of character, so to

speak, when he came. He reversed the standards of men with the standard of God. He was verily the first-born of a new creation. And the authentic and genuine record, where his acts and words stand recorded, must ever act powerfully on men to bring out in more radiant portraiture the spiritual elements that lie, like the painter's colors, without distinction or perspective, mixed and fused in separate masses, unrelieved and unshaded, but which only need his delicate touch and his more delicate taste to make the very canvas breathe before us, and enchant the world. Within us, and lying all around us in the lowliest walks of life, there are the oils and the oxides, the acids and the alkalies, (to continue the figure,) which need to be but properly prepared and laid on to create a picture lifelike and beautiful, which men beholding shall say, "Lo, the image of Christ, full of his grace and truth!" This moral painting is our work in the present state, and may we ever follow it with the high appreciation of the ancient artist, who, when complained of for the slowness of his execution as compared with that of some others, exclaimed, "But I paint for immortality!"

The Christ in us, the Christ of Experience and Consciousness, in fact, becomes chiefly possible and real to us because it is preceded by the Christ of History. The best men of the old world are far inferior to the best men of the modern world. They may have had some splendid virtues, but they were too often likewise marred with splendid sins. A Chris-

tian is required to be "perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Nor is it only here and there a fully believing and confirmed disciple that Jesus acts upon for a good end. The great mass of men in Christian countries are better because he has breathed the air and trod the soil of earth. Few but what have caught something from him. His laws have been diluted into Mahometanism; his promises have been wafted far and wide into heathen climes. The conscience of the world is sharper, that Jesus lived the absolute law of rectitude; the heart of the world is tenderer, that he cried from the cross for the forgiveness of his enemies. We will not chide those who do wonders in his name, even if they do not follow with us; for he is to be the Christ of humanity, and not the Christ of a sect, or nation, or age. The living of Christ dates an era spiritually as significant as the living of Adam did materially and physiologically. Against the little faith of mankind, their doubts and sneers, there is always, now and henceforth, this prevailing answer and reproof, — Jesus lived, Jesus lived. In no protected by-place, where his virtue was shielded; in no hermit's cave, where he had but himself to subdue; in no fairy or fictitious conditions; but down in this hard, work-day world, coping with all kinds of men, mixing with the busy, sinning multitude, bound by earth's-ties, wearing its garments of flesh, eating his bread with the sweat of his brow, and toiling for the bread of life for others with the sweat of blood, Jesus lived and Jesus

died. Those mighty facts are rooted in history, and they can now never die out of the memory of man. The sceptic may sometimes have hawked at and scorned them, as he has, for example, pronounced the matchless poem of the Iliad the work of many hands, and not of one Homer, or the writings of Virgil and Tacitus the achievements of the monks in the Middle Ages, buried in their cobweb cells; but until he can call Greece a *myth* and Rome a *simulacrum*, or image, he must confess that here is a greater than Greece or Rome, the light of the world, the sovereign spirit of the ages, in which humanity at last finds its head and its union with the Divinity. Jesus lived; therefore his disciples live also. His most gracious promise has been made good. He is the cause, they are the effect.

“ Once they were mourners here below,
And wet their couch with tears;
They wrestled hard, as we do now,
With sins and doubts and fears.

“ I ask them whence their victory came;
They, with united breath,
Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,
Their triumph to his death.

“ Our glorious Leader claims our praise,
For his own pattern given,
While the long cloud of witnesses
Shows the same path to heaven.”

The vital point, therefore, in conclusion, on which both the Christ of Prophecy and the Christ of His-

tory terminate, is the Christ of Experience, Christ formed within, the heart moulded after that divine type, and the life led by that perfect law of love. Only so far as we have the spirit of Christ can we be his. Only so far as we appropriate in sympathetic imitation the beauties, glories, and sanctities that charm us in the Son of God, are we entitled to be called Christians. This test sifts and simplifies sects, this solves controversies, this shows us the mystery of godliness so plain that he may run who readeth it.

But of what avail is bread, if we do not eat of it? or water, if we do not quench our thirst? or the sun, if we do not walk in his beams? And in reference to this, it has been no less strikingly than beautifully said: "We say the sun rises, but it does not rise; it is only the earth rolling us upward where we can behold his light. So, when the Sun of Righteousness rises upon us, the change is in ourselves, not in him." *

We cannot be Christs, but we can be Christians, like Christ. He had a peculiar office, he did wonderful works, and he escaped the taint that haunts all the children of men, the plague-spot of sin. But he is not the less our example, none the less our inspiration. The Holy Spirit takes of his and gives it to us. We cannot say all he said, but we can say all we do say in his spirit. We cannot do all he did, but we can do all we do do in his love.

* W. O. B. Peabody.

To take a familiar illustration. The private citizen cannot do or be like Washington. He cannot command armies, he cannot make good a revolution, he cannot sit in the chair of state. But the example of that noblest of mere men is none the less to be recommended as a model. For the severe truth, the lofty principle, the steady rectitude, the pure flame of patriotism that never burned low, never burned gross, in the heart of Washington, can be copied, lived, and loved in every-day life by the humblest of his countrymen.

But Jesus does more than lead us to follow him; he is the Mediator to lead us up higher, highest, to the Supreme and Adorable Father, that we may through him be "followers of God as dear children"; that, having escaped the lusts of the world, we may become partakers of the Divine nature, of the Divine holiness. As another of the years of nature, and, in coincidence almost with it, another of the years of grace, passes away, and new ones come, full-handed with blessings, and bearing the benediction of the Infinite Parent, may we all begin the new year anew, live in newness of life, and aspire after that better life led by the Son of God on earth, and that brighter heaven to which he has ascended.

DISCOURSE XIII.



THE FULNESS OF CHRIST.

FOR IT PLEASSED THE FATHER THAT IN HIM SHOULD ALL FULNESS DWELL. — Colossians i. 19.

IN WHOM ARE HID ALL THE TREASURES OF WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE. — ii. 3.

FOR IN HIM DWELLETH ALL THE FULNESS OF THE GODHEAD BODILY. — ii. 9.

ALL great things are slowly perceived and felt. Thousands of years must pass before the conception of Cosmos, a universal order and beneficent law, could be produced, and all the myriad phenomena of nature be grouped under broad and harmonious principles. The grand in natural scenery dawns slowly on the mind. The Alps, Niagara, the ocean, are appreciated only after long culture. Ages must pass before the idea and worship of one God could be established, and ages more before the fatherly character of this Great Being could be understood and felt. But few great men and geniuses are comprehended in their day. Socrates is better known now than he was in old Athens. Plato, Aristotle, Bacon,

Milton, Shakespeare, Washington, Luther, are more revered now, as their greatness looms up in all its vast proportions, than they were by those who shook hands and ate bread with them.

The same rule has befallen the case of Him whom this day * celebrates with joy and exultant piety, and grateful trust, all over the broad lands of Christendom. Slowly has the sublime greatness of Jesus dawned on the human intellect, and his exquisite excellence been felt by the heart. Even his own disciples did not know him. Peter rebuked him at one time, and denied him at another. Judas betrayed, Thomas distrusted, and all deserted him. We feel that a veil was on the hearts of all who surrounded him in his ministry, though at times the veil was rent, and they caught transient glimpses of his superhuman glory. The Jews did not penetrate his mystery, his glorious secret of a universal kingdom on earth and a universal salvation in heaven ; and the Romans, who were not under the sway of one set of prejudices, were under that of another, and they crucified him. The men of his time did not know him, because they did not possess the kindred traits of mind which would act as keys of interpretation to unlock the treasures of his character. To a warlike age, what was the Prince of Peace ? to a sensual one, the Master of morals ? to a superstitious and idolatrous one, the Teacher of a pure and spiritual worship ?

* Preached on Christmas Day.

We, too, with all our other improvements, but feebly understand Jesus Christ. His fulness has hardly dawned upon his Church. Our intellectual conceptions are too narrow and barren, our sensibilities too coarse and earth-bound, and our characters not high-toned enough to fully sympathize with this miracle and prodigy of earth, this glory of heaven. We have entertained a mighty angel unawares. He said, "O righteous Father! the world hath not known thee." So hath it not known thee, O Son of God! Dark mists of error, deadening atmospheres of sin, cold clouds of unbelief, have wrapped out of sight the morning star, and covered the rejoicing blue of heaven with gloom.

Hence little can be done to reveal the true glory of Jesus by way of eulogy. The pith of the matter must be in men. They must be themselves like him, and try to be like him, and then they will begin to see and know him as he is, in all his beautiful and powerful traits. The *open sesame* to this depth of wisdom is in the heart even more than the mind.

The Apostles and Evangelists wrote better lives of him than they themselves knew. They recorded "a plain, unvarnished tale." They pronounced no funeral orations, wrote no obituary, erected no monument. They simply recited the narrative of his sayings, doings, and sufferings, and left the stubborn facts to make their own eulogy to the world.

Although this true knowledge of Jesus is slowly impressed on the world, yet it is all-important in

itself; and the practical advance of his cause, and true human welfare, depends more on the growth of a true idea of the Author and Finisher of faith, than it does upon any accuracy of creed, or intensity of emotion, or bustle of reform. Creed, emotion, and reform are all needed, but only so far as they involve a correct notion of the character, life, mission, and plan of Jesus, can they square according to the eternal laws and ordinances of God and his universe, and be therefore either permanent or beneficial.

The fulness of Christ, his complete and entire fulfilment of all the qualities and conditions necessary to constitute him a sufficient Saviour of mankind, may best be seen by an enumeration of some particulars.

1. *Jesus was the fulfilment of Prophecy.* We should have expected beforehand that so great a being would be preannounced. There would naturally be signs of his coming. He must, to fill out a natural want of the heart, be foreseen and forefelt. He was predicted even to Adam; Abraham saw his day, and was glad; Moses prophesied of a Prophet like unto himself, and David and Isaiah often gave utterance, in glowing strains of poetry, to the Jewish hope of a coming Messiah. This people still cling to the prediction to this day, and will not believe that it has been accomplished. They testify by their immortal faith that the hope is a real and earnest one. Even in Pagan lands, the same fore-feeling of a great coming change in the fortunes of the world was widely

diffused, according to Suetonius and other Latin authors. Plato, in Greece, expressed the want in a remarkable passage in his writings. And wise men from the East, obedient to this deep-seated anticipation, came to hail the advent of Jesus while a babe in the manger. So must there have been the break of day before the sun appeared. It adds dignity and greatness to the Saviour, that he was thus the subject of prophecy, that he was wanted before he came, that he had a glory with the Father before the world was, and that he was the completion of the universe and the perfecting stroke of humanity. The rivers and forests, sun and sky, flowers and fruits, were not finished. They had a grace to be clothed with and a meaning to be drawn from them which only the Son of God could give. What Nature yearned after, but did not attain in all her mighty works, and what man hoped to know and be, came to its head and flowering in the perfect man and prophetic Christ Jesus.

2. The second particular is *the historical*, as well as the prophetical Christ. He was a fact as well as a hope. Prophecy is, in truth, but history anticipated, and history is but prophecy in retrospect. Jesus lived, taught, suffered, and died. All this is recorded in those most wonderful books in the world, the Four Gospels. Many, in these subtle and subjective days, when the mind is inclined, in literature and art, to turn in upon itself, and forget the grand objective Nature lying all around us as a school of

culture, are disposed to disregard the Historical Christ. But without the record we should be ignorant of the sentiment. The truth must be anchored where it may be found. It must have a local habitation and a name. The facts are the coarse shells and husks to hold and protect the tender kernel of the spirit. Jesus teaches forgiveness, for instance, in beautiful words; but how much more powerful is the lesson when it is elucidated and glorified by his own conduct, by his act of forgiveness on the cruel cross! The floating air-castles of fine thoughts and feelings are here put into the iron and the granite of real facts, capable of constant reference and connection and use. Here is the Practical Navigator by which we take our reckoning on the voyage of life. And were the churches all to agree to abide by the Four Gospels as their sole and sufficient creed, exacting and imposing no more, and rest upon the teachings of Jesus as pure Christianity, and his life as the perfect exemplification and explanation of what he taught, both union and success would be multiplied to an infinite degree.

3. The completeness of Jesus as a Saviour is exemplified in a remarkable extent by *his teachings*. These lessons have several striking characteristics. They do not affect total originality; they are the scions of a new fruit, grafted on the old stocks of the past. They are the gold from much sand. Their simplicity and dignity sometimes blind us to their power and depth. The whole host of the obvious,

the tame, the mediocre, is passed over, and the very centre of the target is hit by every word. He never opened his lips without saying something important, the ultimate and highest that could be said on that point. When he generalized, as in summing up all human duty into two rules, where Moses had made ten, and most moralists many score, — or in details, where he defines and illustrates, as in the parable of the Talents, and the Good Samaritan, — we see both the breadth and the accuracy of his intellect. But he created as well as gathered. Where were parables and prayers like his? where such beatitudes and discourses, such close replies in conversation, such sober calculation of the truth, and such brilliant anticipation of the future? If this were not all knowledge, all science, it is what is above all knowledge and science, even superlative wisdom, the extract and quintessence of knowledge, and without which to know all the birds, fishes, trees, flowers, on earth and in all worlds, makes the mind but a huge curiosity-shop. Much knowledge, after all, as men are too prone to know it, is but stuff, making men think they are something when they are nothing, puffing them up with the conceit that they are wise when they are full of folly. The philosopher, gazing at the stars over his head and falling into a well at his feet, is the emblem of but too much of the science and knowledge on which mankind plume themselves. They may know the distant, the great, and the lofty, but they may be ignorant of themselves, not know how

to make the sound mind in a sound body, or how to keep out of the fire and water of the passions and appetites. Jesus gives us not knowledge of facts, but the wisdom of principles, the truth of God and eternity. He can draw a higher law from the bird and the flower than the ornithologist or botanist, even the minute and the mighty care of Providence over all its works and creatures. He can infer from the passing news of the day, when told of the accident which befalls the men of Siloam, and the cruelty of King Herod, better doctrines than the historian. When he converses, we feel that he always has the best of the argument; and when he teaches, it is with the easy majesty of a king, with self-respect and dignity to others. The form of his instructions, too, is blended with wisdom, as the color with the leaf. By historical associations, by natural objects, by human employments, by parable and by story, he utters his godlike sayings, and enshrines them in a form which will at once illustrate and endear them. The world outgrows its teachers one after another, and when once gone there is no revival. No combination could bring back the sophists of Greece, the rhetoricians of Rome, the Scribes and Pharisees of Judea, the Magi of Persia, and the Schoolmen of the Middle Ages. But it is a peculiarity of this Teacher, that the world does not outgrow him; but he has anticipated the world, and even yet it has not grown up to him. Then, too, he spoke the truth in love, — not in scorn, not even in conscious superiority. So

much sacredness has been attached to Jesus, that his disciples have sometimes been insensible to the intellectual as well as moral qualities exhibited in his instruction. But it would be easy to show by the canons of criticism, if it were necessary, that no poet, prophet, orator, or philosopher has embodied such wisdom in such a form, and instinct with such a life and immortality. The mood of mind in which we come from a book — a true test of its real merit or demerit — bears clearest evidence of the perfection of the teachings of Jesus, and their full-toned harmony with our rarest and best selves. When we rise from some books, it is with an excited mind; from others, with a saddened, or an anxious, or a scornful, or a self-satisfied, or a fantastic one. But the perusal of the Gospels leaves a robust, calm, life-like, daylight atmosphere around us, in which duty is invested with new dignity and worth, trial puts on a milder feature, and all of existence looks clearer, sweeter, more real and more hopeful and glorious.

4. In that sphere, even higher than thought and teaching, of *action*, the fulness of Jesus is yet more conclusive; for it is easier, so much easier, to say than to do, to utter even glorious truths, than to be and to do all that becomes the highest and purest style of character. Not to overdo, nor underdo; not to go too far, or to come short; not to exaggerate one duty to neglect or undervalue another; not to make faults even out of virtues, or let our deeds outrun our actual moral state; not to be swayed by conventional stand-

ards one iota over the line of rectitude, but to yield instinctively to the true motive, without calculation and without compulsion, — this is the labor, this is the work, which only the True One can do. Jesus moved in many human relations, as son, friend, brother, citizen; in those belonging to his mission, as Teacher, Reformer, Saviour, Example, Master, Prophet, Miracle-Worker; in spiritual and abstract ones, as a conscious and responsible intelligence, a child of the Everlasting Father, and an heir of immortal being; — and yet in all he could say, Who convicteth me of sin? — and the answer came back from Pilate, I find in him nothing amiss; and from Judas, I have betrayed innocent blood; and from the centurion, Verily, this was a righteous man. The graceful harmony he maintained between his miracles and his common conduct, the unconscious and yet living tone of his energy, pulsing out as naturally from his being as blood to and fro out of the heart, the just attention he paid to the venerated and the conventional while he introduced the new and holier type of character, assure us that, to live and act like Jesus, we must be like him. No seeming, no constraint, no rules of duty, no servile copying of example, no hasty resolves, and no reluctant practice, can bring up our moral posture to this dignity and uprightness, and inspire us to act in all things to the full bent and top of our spiritual being, without drawback or discount.

But while all admit essentially the high and per-

fect style of Jesus's action, all do not consider its immeasurable power. It is like the motion of the globe itself, so easy that we do not perceive it; like the music of the spheres, so melodious that we do not hear it. Power with violence all men can appreciate, but power with gentleness and order is not so palpable to most. They can see the force of the lightning, but not of the sunbeams. Power is not always seen until its reaction; the force of the blow is measured by the extent of the recoil. The effect of Jesus is seen in the reaction of nations, the recoil of Christendom, the answer back of regenerated millions. These stupendous facts of history utter the greatness of his action better than it were possible for our judgments to estimate it, or even our imaginations to sketch and color it. Jesus spoke, and the world is slowly rising up as from a bed of sleep, to hear. Jesus worked, and a race send back the infinite movements of life to portray the depth and volume and fertility of that great mission to man. The prevalence of Jesus over the earth, the harmonizing power of his character even where his doctrines are bones of contention, and the promise of a new human state typed and colored and savored after one spirit, show as no words can utter the sublime depths of that spiritual action which the Lord enacted in the few years of his ministry, and the victory which he thus gained, not only for himself, but also for us. Well might he exult, and say, I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven. All evil will and must and does fall before such omnipotent virtue.

5. But in fulness of *suffering*, as well as of thought and of action, we discern the real greatness of Jesus. This completes the circle. In trial, temptation, suffering, and death, — in that he was tested in the wilderness, was weary at the well, wept at the tomb of Lazarus, learned obedience by the things he suffered, uttered strong crying and tears, and died on the cross, — we feel a threefold chord of attraction. Had he always been successful, always victorious, and always happy, he could have been no Saviour for a race conditioned and characterized as ours, — with many falls to discourage us, with many temptations to assault, with fears within and fightings without, and the solemn destiny over all. But now, inasmuch as he hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted. Lifted up on the cross, he draws all men to him. Only wise, only good, only strong, the Saviour would have been far from sufficient for all exigencies of human nature and discipline, unless he had stooped under the heavy burden of the cross, and cried in extremest agony, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” The poor in lowest want, the most abject slave, the mortally sick and wounded and dying, raise their eyes to the sufferer on the cross, and catch a gleam of consolation, sweet and unutterable. We can pull at the hem of his garment, as did the poor woman, and in faith and hope we rest assured that in awful crises, in future judgments, in scenes of glory and of terror too dazzling for mortal eyes to behold, his face

will be turned to every disciple with compassion, and his arms stretched out in relief. Authority is given him to execute judgment because he is the Son of Man, and knows our nature, and can make allowance and alleviation for our errors and sins.

In conclusion, it is satisfying to the intellect to dwell on perfect truth, to the conscience, on the absolute right, to the heart, on infinite love ; and when, from the heights of the Divinity, we fall back wearied and discouraged to earth, it comforts us to see the image of all these glories in their fulness in Jesus. He is the Mediator, standing midway, bringing God down to men and men up to God. He stands between the past and the future as the Prophetic and Historical Man, and as Teacher, Actor, and Sufferer fulfilled his august mission. But the world has not known him ; his Church have not seen him as he is, or it never would have enacted horrid persecutions, and uttered anathemas, and perpetrated pious frauds in the name of Jesus. The Church has called him Very God, but it has failed to see what was godlike in him, and imitate it. The systems of philosophy have overtopped with their rank growth the garden of the Lord. The tyrannies of government have cramped and chained the human mind, until it could not recognize the Lord of liberty. The heavy sins of time and sense have weighed on the knowledge of a spiritual Redeemer. The life of Jesus has once been written by disciples unconscious in a measure how great it was ; but it is now writing

itself in large characters on institutions, nations, churches, across continents and centuries. Kingdoms are its sentences, and churches its periods, and civilizations its paragraphs and chapters. The Spirit of all truth, wisdom, and love open our eyes to see, and our hearts to feel, the grace and power and glory and fulness of our Lord Jesus Christ! Well may the world enact a glad jubilee for the birth of the Good Brother, who came to help us, came into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. Let the world be happy and buoyant and grateful, and let every cheerful and gladsome association of gift and friendship and love and childhood and festival and hilarity weave a charm for the day, and consecrate it and imparadise it to the memory and the heart. Shun, O, shun the cold faith that stumbles at reasons, and demands facts and dates, and does not see and feel the spell of a day, the thrill of old memorials, and that does not sing and shout again with angels and with angelic children, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will to men." For then glory would be given with new, spontaneous worship, and peace would say to clashing Turk and Christian, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath," and good-will would overflow from happy homes to sweeten the sour, harsh world, and endue it with the savor of Christ, mild and gracious.

For with reverence and trust we recognize his right to this loyalty from the human soul and kind.

In narrow Judea, he rose from a peasant's home, and was the all-wise teacher, the all-perfect actor. Not having learned letters, he became universal in wisdom, and the world sits humbly at his feet. The son of a carpenter, he has ascended the throne of the world and of all ages. Dying upon a cross, he has become the Author of Eternal Life. "Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

DISCOURSE XIV.



JESUS THE RE-CREATOR.

NEITHER IS THERE SALVATION IN ANY OTHER, FOR THERE IS NONE OTHER NAME UNDER HEAVEN GIVEN AMONG MEN WHEREBY WE MUST BE SAVED. — Acts iv. 12.

THE text declares that Christ's is the only saving name on earth. Other terms are used elsewhere in the New Testament, to indicate the paramount value of his religion over all other instrumentalities for man's well-being in this world and in that to come. "The light of the world," "the way, the truth, and the life," "the bread from heaven," "the water of life," and many comparisons of a similar character, are made both in the instructions of Christ and of his Apostles. But, either from an inadequate idea of the depth and inveteracy of moral evil on one side, or from a failure to see the perfect fitness of God's remedy for it on the other, this truth is yet widely unfelt or denied. Men do not confess that here is the very help they need. They resort elsewhere. They apply to this or that pretender, instead of the only infallible Physician. With some insuffi-

cient and temporary expedient, they patch up evils which the miraculous touch of the Son of God is requisite to cure. Lanterns and lamps are of no little use, but he would not be accounted wise who should propose to substitute them for the sun. This age has great skill in its arts of fashioning matter, and using immaterial agencies for its purposes. But the soul is another world, and the soul's salvation another work. And we must concede that he who created its immortal faculties, and set in motion its wondrous springs of affection and action, had a knowledge of its wants, and a power to meet its manifold exigencies, here and hereafter, by means and motives which infinitely transcend human devices. Let us consider some of the substitutes which have been proposed by some men for the great instrument of man's highest good.

1. *Liberty* has been proposed in modern times as a specific for all earth's sins and woes. She is the goddess, as Mammon is the god, of the present civilization, — not a mere nominal divinity, but adored with actual rites and ceremonies, and obeyed by loyal devotees. Summoned upon the theatre of Europe by the fearless voice of Luther, breaking forth in the tremendous throes of successive French revolutions, and winning her more complete triumph in the New World, liberty is one of the strongest passions of modern history. And no wonder. When you have entered the house of human bondage, and walked through all its dark corridors, and looked into its sun-

less dungeons, have counted its grim chains and manacles, shuddered at its racks and wheels, still rusty with human blood, heard "the sighing of the prisoner," and traced his sorrows etched with a nail upon the stone wall of his cell, and listened to the iron doors grating harsh thunder upon their hinges, and remembered the dreadful secrets of the prison-house, no wonder your blood boils at man's inhumanity to man. The Bastiles of tyranny have fallen before this potent indignation. Let them fall. There are some evils too great to be borne. All honor is due, and has been paid, to those who, by their "labors, dangers, and sufferings," have lifted the yoke from the neck of humanity, and said to myriads, "Ye are men, go free." The names of Washington, Lafayette, and Clarkson, the several heroes of American, French, and African freedom, will endure as long as the earth.

But then we need only glance at the condition of the freest nations to see that Liberty, star-crowned as she is, can be no substitute for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Under her dominion men may know their rights, but they need another master to teach them their duties. Liberty must take law into her partnership, or she is but another name for license. And when the general relations of society are equitably adjusted, and justice done between man and man, what a wide empire of character is beyond her reach! The joys and sorrows of home, the mixed fortunes of adversity and prosperity, the passions and affections

of moral beings, habit, taste, and education,—all these need other comforters, controllers, and sanctifiers than her. National liberty, glorious boon as it is, is external. But the liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free, is carried into the inmost recesses of the mind. Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty, —liberty from anger and malice and lust and drunkenness, and the whole legion of evil spirits wherewith society is possessed. The potsherd of the earth may strive together; but the only complete emancipation even from the bondage of tangible chains and whips, the slave-ship and the slave-market, must descend from a higher plane than that of the freest human constitutions. God must thunder and lighten out of heaven. The “Father of his Country” may live and die, but his great example has not made even his own State a land of freemen. We may write free laws for ever; but so long as Anti-christ prevails, even the African slave-trade will charter vessels from our many-churched cities, and invest capital from American merchants. Thus even the perfections of liberty cannot come until the fulness of the coming of the Son of Man; then how much less the thousand retired and refined blessings which liberty, from the necessity of the case, cannot dispense.

2. Some, again, seem to worship our *Modern Civilization* as the last point of excellence man is to attain on earth. The crying demand for a spiritual regeneration is postponed for external ease and luxury. It must be confessed that a wonderful energy

and ingenuity are now abroad in the earth. Comfortable houses, beautiful garments, abundance to eat and to drink, growing cities, a wide-spread commerce, expeditious travelling, news sped by lightning, a vast territory rapidly peopling, are familiar pictures to our minds. But do not so many curious appliances and comforts wait upon the body, that there is danger the soul will go to sleep? When the sacred writer wished to describe the growing degeneracy of the chosen people, he said, "Jeshuran (a term of endearment for Israel) waxed fat, and kicked." That phrase describes the two great eras in a nation's growth: first, of prosperity; and secondly, of insolent power, forgetting right. Thus modern civilization has woven so thick a veil, that many seem to be incapable or indisposed to look through it, and to see underneath the living texture of divine laws, and our accountableness to the will of the Supreme.

Strange and deplorable result, if home become so attractive that it should prove a rival to heaven! Sad mistake, if the charms of earthly friendship and comfortable life should dull our sensibilities to our holy relationship to God and Christ!

We need to know that what is best and safest in this modern civilization has flowed from Christianity; but that, so far as this vast scope and movement of human affairs is disconnected from Christ, as its controlling principle and sanctifying motive, it is base and soulless and dangerous; that there is hazard of entombing our souls in this magnificent earthly good.

We need to recall to mind that the splendid gift of life was not bestowed that we might dress in purple or fine linen, or fare sumptuously every day, or even that we might ride a mile a minute, cross the ocean in ten days, or send a despatch round the globe in the twinkling of an eye. These great discoveries and developments in the world of matter indicate only the more significantly the leadings of Divine Providence, that there should be corresponding improvements in the moral world.

He who rides a mile a minute ought to be using that grand conveyance on no fool's errand. He who can cross the Atlantic in ten days should feel himself commissioned to do some great and good work for man, when the Almighty has thus put in his hands the sceptre of the winds and waves, and they obey him. He who can send swifter than the sun's flight messages from clime to clime, ought to charter the telegraph with some noble word, some good tidings of good, like that ancient strain of piety and peace which broke upon the ears of shepherds watching their flocks by night.

Modern civilization, apart from the spiritual sanctions, is of the earth, earthy; it cannot take the place of the Lord from heaven. It is all good and safe, when kept down at the proper secondary mark; but if it arise, and assume prouder titles, and the privilege of monopolizing immortal capacities for mortal uses, the watchmen must cry aloud, and spare not. It is no inconsiderable part of the office

of the Christian Church and ministry, at the present day, to lift up a steady warning against the predominance of material interests. Firmly, perseveringly, without anger, and without despair, to resist the ocean-tide of worldliness, and to say to its proud waves, "Thus far and no farther." For none can look abroad, and not see that the world, so called, has got a fearful hold of men's minds in this country, and throughout the civilized nations. Everything, even virtue, is to be turned to profit. What does not bring money is not, in general, thought to be worth anything. Then is there no fear that we have another God than the Lord of heaven and earth, even Mammon, as the actual deity of our worship ?

Tried by every rule, and weighed in every balance, modern civilization, as such, is found wanting. Ill can it suffice for its own temporal needs, and keep itself out of fire and water ; how much less meet the great need of immortal man ! Ill can it stand in the place of Christ for the healing of the nations. Its god is gold, its aim is self ; too many of its governments are tyrannies ; too many of its critics, Sodoms ; its traffic, alas, is in the bodies and souls of God's children ; its highest honors are military butcheries ; and its only tolerable deserts are discolored reflections from His glory who died on the cross.

3. I pass to another name, that would seem to be named by some as a substitute for the Gospel, *Reformation, Philanthropy, a new organization of society*. The plea is ingenious, because it has some truth to

give it countenance. It is said, that, notwithstanding Christianity and the Christian Church have existed so many centuries in the world, the dreadful evils of society have gone unreformed. The Gospel has not yet brought men to give glory to God in the highest, or peace and good-will toward men; therefore the need of a new instrument, Reformation, or Association. True, the Gospel has failed of many of its designed results, but it is because it has been corrupted, both under Greek, Catholic, and Protestant forms. But there it is, in the life of Christ, in the books of the New Testament, and it will never suffer man to give sleep to his eyes, or slumber to his eyelids, until it has made all things new.

It is said, also, by the reformer, that though men make institutions, institutions in turn make men. That they act and react upon one another. That the laws, the customs, and the management of civil and religious concerns, exert a far-reaching control over the individual character. For example, that you may preach heavenly-mindedness, but how can you expect any considerable amount of spirituality on a slave plantation, in the brutal camp, or in the damp, cold cellars of city pauperism? We confess we cannot. For men are incalculably affected by the circumstances and influences around them, the media through which they look and in which they act; and though they may, in a moment of conscious strength, adopt the poet's motto, "The mind is its own place," yet in most things, and for most pur-

poses, we know but too well that the body is the mind's place. It becomes, accordingly, a matter of the last consequence that the permanent institutions of society, and the customs of the time, should all square with the Christian standard. Christ must judge them, and decide whether they shall stand or fall. He must judge war, every war, and determine whether it shall be allowed any longer to rage and devour. He must judge slavery, and pronounce the condemning sentence of its overthrow. He must arraign the murderous traffic in spirituous, poisonous drinks, and say whether it shall continue to hatch, by the wholesale, pauperism, and gambling, and licentiousness, and murder. He must sit as sole and final umpire upon all the great questions that now agitate society, the relations of labor and capital, the rights and sphere of woman, the mode of land-holding, the organization of society by association or otherwise, the relations of the classes and pursuits of men one to another, social and international intercourse, commercial restrictions and civil disabilities, the lawfulness of certain employments detrimental to the weal of portions of society, the multiform practices of doing evil that good may come, and the doctrine of expediency.

And in this just judgment, whatever Christ by his word rejects, we, who are his followers, must reject; and whatever he commands, we must do, let whoever will say nay.

So much we yield to Reformation. It is a great

and good work in our day. It is, properly conceived and executed, the application of Christianity to society. It is the parallelism of the Gospel with humanity. It is the realization of the ideas of Christ. There is no danger of too much discussion and agitation on these matters, provided it be in candor and kindness of heart.

With such qualifications, we bid God-speed to the cause of prison discipline, improved social organization and life, prevention of pauperism, freedom, peace, temperance, chastity. We cannot approve, indeed, of every word that is said, or every act that is done, in these great causes. What human undertakings are not marred by passion and imperfection? But he must be blind to the signs of the times, who does not see that a new era of the world's destiny has opened.

But what we protest against is, simply, that moral reformation, or any new organization of society, can take the place, as some seem to contend, of the religion of Jesus Christ. This would argue an exclusiveness and illiberality ill befitting those who call themselves philanthropists. For, in the outset, how could these great moral movements start, unless there were the heaven-derived and omnipotent influences of Christian ideas acting behind? This is the ever-flowing river, that sets in motion all the wheels and complicated machinery of practical philanthropy. This is the exhaustless reservoir and lake that fills all the pipes, aqueducts, and fountains, and quenches

a city's thirst, and cleanses a city's impurity. Christ is the reformer's wisdom and guidance and strength, and without him he could do nothing. Then, again, grant that you could by a possibility get the world all reformed, the timepiece wound up and running well, property more equalized, education and happiness universal. How long would the millennium last, without Christ? Self is still there, and passion is busy, and the old man will again come to life though he has once been crucified with the lusts thereof; and then the world is as bad as it was before, and you have all your work to do over again. No; Christ is the only sovereign and legitimate reformer, as he is the Saviour of the individual soul, and those only who go forth in his name and spirit are mighty to the pulling down of strong-holds. He, and he only, bears a commission and power from heaven, to re-create the world, to regenerate human society, as the human heart, with the grace and truth of God; to reform mankind, and, when that is done, keep them reformed, and thus make the sceptre of his kingdom a perpetual sceptre of righteousness.

4. Again, and lastly, *Education*, great and beneficent as its power is, cannot of itself redeem the world. Far be it from my lips, which have not unfrequently been opened to plead its cause, to utter a word in its disparagement. If the world is ever to be better and happier, it must be in no slight measure by a better family and common-school Christian nurture. For as long as we take the young, and "score them

all over" with our prejudices, and warp their unsophisticated minds into the so-called ways of the world, which are too often ways of deceit and crookedness, we cannot expect to see any rapid advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. But education, like all those great movements of benevolence to which reference has been made, is powerless of good when disjoined from Christ. The culture of the mind exclusively becomes a doubtful good, if moral training keep not an even pace with it. Too long have we been content to unfold the intellectual, and to let the conscience, the moral affections, and the spiritual aspirations run to waste.* Our schools ought all to be schools of Christ, by his law being held supreme, and his spirit governing every word and imbuing every lesson. Jesus, as the perfect representative of our spiritual nature in its development, the Son of Man as well as the Son of God, encourages the earliest moral training. He called children to him. He chided his disciples who would repel them. He pronounced his blessing upon them. At one time, he set a little child in the midst, and bade his disciples be converted and become like little children, or they could not enter his kingdom. And he left it in charge to his Apostles, "Feed my lambs." Education, then, in its higher forms, has the explicit encouragement of Him who knew what was in man.

* It has been well said, "There is but one high school, and it is that in which the heart is educated."

But without the alliance of the Gospel, this great instrument would be but a broken reed to lean upon.

We have thus cursorily glanced at liberty, at modern civilization, moral reformations, and education, and have found them all good in themselves, and in their place, but each and all inadequate to take the place of the heaven-sent Gospel, and prove the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation. In fact, that what is essentially good in them is due to Christianity; that they are fruit-bearing branches, it the life-sustaining root,—they the dependent streams, it the ever-living fountain. And what is now needed to carry these noble movements to new heights of purity and power, and make them felt more generally through the length and breadth of the community, is a more direct and courageous application of the truth as it is in Jesus. Let, then, our freemen be freemen in the Lord. Let our great statesmen strike the high key of Christian principle, instead of for ever appealing to a sordid, penny-wise expediency, and they will find the hearts of a Christian people answering to them, as deep unto deep. Let our civilization be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and then it will arise from its grovelling, and become a blessing, and a beauty, and a joy among men. Let our moral reformers, burying their personal quarrels and private griefs, and taking the lofty vantage-ground of Christian ideas and aims, blow their awakening trumpets with their present zeal, and they

will shake down the walls of every heathen Jericho which they thus encompass. Let our teachers and professors of every branch of learning, art, and science drink of the pure spirit of the meek and lowly Jesus, and they will acquire an unsuspected power over all the avenues to the human heart, and will be able to train up a generation of the just and wise, and lead on the happy ages of the Millennium.

We end, therefore, where we began. In the language of the dying martyr, "None but Christ, none but Christ." "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Let us often repeat these words in the conflict of human opinions, and the bewildering mazes of speculation. Let our hearts rest here with an assured faith. And let that holy name be not the sport of the profane; let it be revered and loved and blessed, for it was borne by Him who freely gave up all, even unto death, for our sakes, that he might reconcile us to God.

DISCOURSE XV.

GROUP OF THE CRUCIFIXION.

NOW THERE STOOD BY THE CROSS OF JESUS HIS MOTHER, AND HIS MOTHER'S SISTER, MARY THE WIFE OF CLEOPAS, AND MARY MAGDALENE. — John xix. 25.

THREE Marys stood by the heavenly sufferer, when his disciples had, with the exception of John, forsaken him in the hands of his enemies, — all bound to him by the strongest ties of kindred, love, and gratitude. His mother, and her sister, and she whom he had cured of a desperate insanity.

The revelation to the Jews by Moses, and to the world by Christ, has one great element of strength and adaptation in its introduction of such a variety of human characters. No history has so many well-drawn portraits of men and women as the Bible. The painters and sculptors have found here their best subjects. No dramatic writer can furnish such scenes, or revelations of both the ill and good in man, as are witnessed in the history of Abraham, Joseph, Saul, David, Solomon, Job, the Prophets, the Twelve Apostles, the Crucifixion, and the first planting of

the Christian Church. The deep springs of the heart are laid bare. We see men as they are, without exaggeration of either their good or bad qualities. The immense power which this biographical and dramatic element adds to the word, and its great use to the reception, understanding, and love of the truth, are shown by contrast in the absence of these qualities in the Veds of the Hindoos, the Koran of Mahomet, and the system of Confucius. There, all wears a cold abstract or preceptive form, and is not warmed, colored, and made interesting and intelligible by the play of human character, and the varieties and originalities of public and private life. It is a silent witness, too, to the truth of revelation, for it would be a dangerous part for a pretender to play, to introduce so many characters upon the stage, if they were not real, and to make them perform a natural part on all occasions. It would be to multiply to an incalculable extent the chances and means of detection and exposure. Viewed in this light, how striking is the fearlessness with which the sacred writers have brought forward so many narratives, dialogues, families, persons, facts, dates, places, and moved on from Genesis to Revelation with such an array of distinct and original characters,—and all in connection with the main plan, more or less, of the religion taught to the world!

But time forbids me to pursue this tempting path of inquiry any further at present, and I turn to what may be called one section in this long and moving

panorama of human life, to the Group of the Crucifixion ; meaning by that, not only those standing, like the three Marys and John, around the cross itself, but also all who were more or less remotely connected with, or involved in, this tremendous catastrophe. So much has been made of the physical aspects of the scene, the agony, the blood, the darkening sun, the shuddering earth, the opening graves ; and, by most of the Christian world, of the so-called vicarious expiation by Jesus's death of the sins of mankind, that the moral and spiritual traits, the behavior of the great sufferer, his seven memorable declarations on the cross, and the play of character in the actors of the scene, have received much less attention.

Of the Group of the Crucifixion, the dark form of the Traitor first calls our attention ; — Judas, once apostle, now apostate ; a name of infamy to the end of time ; called Iscariot, probably from the place where he lived ; and carefully to be distinguished from the Judas, or Jude, who wrote the Epistle. The crime of Judas was treachery, marked among all men as one of the blackest of sins, implying at once ingratitude and hypocrisy. But his treachery, like all crimes, stood not alone. He had, we are told, been a thief before, and took advantage, as he was the treasurer of the little fraternity, to purloin for his own selfish use the means at once of their livelihood and of their charity. He coveted office, and he was impatient for the time when Jesus should declare him-

self King of the Jews. Of a mean soul, he could not appreciate the beauty of a generous and self-forgetting act like that of the breaking of the alabaster box of precious ointment by Mary, as a token of her uncalculating reverence and love for her Master. His mind was intent upon other matters than the discussion of truth. He asked no sensible or discerning questions. It would appear from what took place afterwards, that he had no personal hostility to Jesus. His sin was not elementally different from that of hundreds and thousands now, the overpowering love of money, office, and distinction. He could sacrifice his soul, and his soul's Saviour, as is done daily in the great world, for filthy lucre. The thirty pieces of silver were more to him than honor, truth, friendship, discipleship. He coolly made *a bargain*, so says the record, and settled upon that ignoble sum as the price of his villany. He saw more worth in that dull coin than in all the lovely spirit and shining beauty and grace of the Son of God. How small a thing is a piece of silver ! yet when it is held closely to the eye, it is big enough to shut out heaven and earth from the view, to blot out God and immortality. He acted the hypocrite. He kissed where he was ready to kill. Yet he may not have had the purpose of murder fully formed. For he may naturally have supposed that the worker of miracles would not suffer himself to be taken. He had escaped from his enemies before, and he might do the same again. Judas may have thought to force Jesus

to declare himself earlier, and no longer keep his disciples in suspense about his office. He had the very common fault of impatience. He wished to hurry matters to a premature conclusion, as does many a one now, who chafes at the slow march of Providence, and the tardy success of a cause he has much at heart. That Judas had no fell hatred, no hot passion or revenge, is demonstrated by the reaction of his mind, when he awoke to the fearful consequences of the crime, and he saw Jesus led away unresisting in the hands of his mortal enemies. The money, lately so attractive in his eyes, and which he counted and recounted with so much greediness, now burnt his hands like fire. Nothing can exceed the simple force of Matthew's narrative. "Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? See thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself." The act of suicide was the recoil of shame, the returning stroke of an avenging conscience. How fearful are the powers of man when wrought up to desperation! Judas performed three acts towards a true repentance. He was sorry for his conduct, and he returned the money, and confessed his guilt. But he failed in the hardest part, of going on and doing better next time. His repentance

was remorse, despair, a sorrow unto death, and he added to the crime of treachery a second sin of self-destruction. This was not true repentance, which consists of four parts, — a genuine sorrow for sin as sin, as done against God, confession, restitution, and, lastly, leading a better life.

The short tragedy of Judas is full of mournful and pungent instruction. It shows how bitter a thing it is to do any wrong, and what terrific consequences may flow from a single act of guilt. It is a touchstone too to reveal the really deep depravity of the common vices; for though they ordinarily pass in obscurity, they are black enough to eclipse the sun in mid-heaven, were the place only Calvary, the victim Jesus. The love of money, intense and determined, is as common as water, and men drink it for their daily beverage; but as Judas sacrificed Christ from this passion, how many are ready to yield up, for a like paltry price, truth, honor, and conscience, and the principles for which Jesus died the death of the cross? They sell justice and humanity for thirty, yea, for less than thirty, pieces of silver. They will buy and sell even the disciples of their Lord, and make horrible merchandise of the souls and bodies for which he suffered. The frauds of business, the corruptions of office, the intrigues for power and place, the low and mean knaveries of the world, are a sea without bottom and without shore. You who know the world know this is no vague and groundless charge. Else why, to cite at present no

other proof, — why is a good and upright man hailed and eulogized, living and dead, as such a rare prodigy, when every one is created, obligated, destined to be that noblest work of God, an honest man, — as an Israelite without guile, — as the cavalier without fear, without reproach, — as a Son of God, without spot or blemish ?

But another character appears in this world-witnessed procession, — Simon Peter, the denier of his Master, the profane, the perjured, the penitent, weeping bitterly, but not the suicide. Had Judas found tears as Peter did, perhaps they would have washed his soul clean of the foul purpose of piling sin upon sin. The story of Peter, short and graphic, I need not repeat to you, for you are familiar with it. Bold in promises, ready to die with Jesus, he is yet the first to deny him in the crisis of danger. Headlong to fight for him, and actually drawing a sword and striking fiercely in his defence, he showed afterwards how much less courage it sometimes takes to fight than it does to tell the truth. He could face a tumultuous mob at dead of night when his blood was up, and fight them at whatever odds, but in the morning he fell at a woman's question in the hall of judgment, by the first touch of trial.

Peter's, too, is a class of minds, and a class of sins ; — bold, but rash ; generous, but unreliable ; full of good impulses, but wavering as a reed, little principle, steadfastness, or consistency.

The circumstances in which he was placed have

put him in a focus of light, where the whole world have seen the fall of Peter. But what did he more than men are doing every day, who yet little reck that act for which the Apostle met the condemning look of the Lord, and for which he went out and wept bitterly? Every falsehood, every prevarication, every insincerity, every pretence, artifice, and deception,—what is it in reality but to repeat in milder or grosser form the sin of Peter? We cannot now deny Jesus personally, but we may his Gospel, and thus virtually crucify him afresh. How often do we say in deeds, if not in words, We know him not! We deny him, or we do not openly and frankly confess him before the world, before those who, like Pilate, have him on trial, to decide whether he is the Saviour or not. The traitor's kiss must have sent a sharp pang to the heart of Jesus, but the denier's oath must have been even more cruel; that one so high, the first name on the apostolic catalogue, should fall so low! If we confess not our Master fearlessly on earth, how can we meet him face to face, and hope to have him acknowledge us as his own before our Father who is in heaven? I know you not, depart from me. You were not willing to be with me and mine in the humiliation of my religion on earth, and you have cut yourselves off from its heavenly triumph and glory.

The contrast is instructive, too, between the impetuous Peter and the loving John. Peter had self-confidence, and it failed him. John had affection,

and it failed not. John could face the cross, Peter could not bear even the preliminary trial. Peter could draw the sword and draw blood, but John awaited the last bequest of the crucified, and cheered his dying hour. How weak is impulse, how strong an unselfish love!

But not only Judas betrayed, and Peter denied; at the time of his arrest, they all forsook him and fled; — striking and melancholy proof of the weakness of the best of men! What a pathos in the word *all*, — *all*, — not a single one left to sustain and console! The best of earth, the chosen of heaven, he who did good to all and injury to none, who loved and prayed for all, who went about doing good, curing diseases, feeding the hungry, preaching the good news, and who was full of the sweetest and holiest affections to all mankind, and who, moreover, was declared by his betrayer, his judge, and his executioner to be innocent of every crime alleged against him, is deserted in his greatest need by every one of his friends. They fell in an onset of unexpected temptation. They quarrelled with one another when they should have prayed to God. They slept when they should have watched. Their heavenly Master is abandoned to his fate, while they flee for personal safety. Here, again, we see the faults of to-day exhibited upon a world-wide stage, and in the illumination of the cross. For whenever we forsake duty for self-interest, and flee from difficulty and danger to save ourselves at the sacrifice of truth,

we put ourselves in the number of the flying Twelve.

Then there appears another company, some friends, and others enemies, of Jesus ; and the individuality of each person is preserved as distinctly by a few words of description as if a Shakespeare had sketched the outlines. These are the accusers, judges, witnesses, crucifiers, and spectators. With a few graphic strokes the Evangelists have placed the whole before us in all the colors and movements of life.

The prejudices of the Jews had taken the alarm at the success of Jesus's preaching, and the number of his converts, and become eager for blood. They demand the death of their Messiah, plot his seizure, bribe his apostate disciple, suborn witnesses, and overawe the tribunal of justice with their numbers and ferocity. We can see them, full of rage, crowding about the judgment-hall, and hear their fierce yells, Away with him ! Crucify him ! Crucify him ! Here is a scene that gives us a lively assurance that it actually occurred. This story of the crucifixion, and all its accompaniments, proclaim loudly their own genuineness.

But terrible as that manifestation of the passions of the multitude is, the same spirit that ran riot in that mob has lived in every age, and broken out again and again. It is the history of bigotry, as old as Cain and Abel ; of people who are mortally offended that others are better than they are ; of narrow prejudices, and heated passions, and intolerant zeal,

and persecuting hypocrisy. It of ancient time killed the Prophets, and stoned them that were sent unto them. It smote Stephen, and beheaded James. It has made religious persecutions the abominations of history, and wars of faith the darkest theatres of vengeance and wrath. Jesus was exposed without shield to this sanguinary spirit, which waited on the forms of law only that it might add cruelty to cruelty, and crucify where otherwise it could only stone its victim.

There were the high-priests, Annas and Caiaphas, before whom he was successively arraigned, who, under the professed mask of religion, embodied the essence of malignant passions, — holy men in outward guise, human tigers in their thirst for innocent blood.

There was Pilate, the Roman governor, confessing that his prisoner is innocent of every charge against him, yet too weak to resist the popular frenzy, when, by doing justice, he would endanger his own office.

There was Herod, the ruler of Christ's own province, Galilee, who took this opportunity, hoping that he should see him perform some miracle, for which he had long had a great curiosity, and who indulged the brutal passions of his iron-hearted soldiers by permitting them to mock and insult their helpless prisoner.

There were the false witnesses who testified against him, but whose testimony was too barefaced

and contradictory to be admitted even into so unscrupulous a trial.

There were the soldiers of Rome, who, bred to outrage and cruelty, and swollen with the pride of boundless empire, vied with one another, and outdid their superiors, in every offensive and insulting and agonizing infliction upon the holy sufferer.

There was the murderer Barabbas, the price of whose release was the death of Jesus. So that the life of the Son of God was twice valued during these transactions; and once the offset was thirty pieces of silver, and once it was the pardon of a notorious criminal!

There were the two robbers executed with him, his right and left hand escort through the iron gates of death, one a penitent and an heir of paradise, — one, as has been said, that none might despair even at the eleventh hour, and only one, that none might presume, — the other hardened and insulting.

There were the rough executioners, who drove the nails and suspended the victim, who mocked his agonies and pierced his side, and who received his mercy when they had no mercy on themselves: "Father, forgive them, for they not what they do." It was the literal truth, and the sole excuse; they did not know, else they would never have done so foul a deed, at which all ages have shuddered with horror, as the earth seemed to do at the time.

There was the Roman centurion, the captain of one hundred men, who superintended the execution,

watching carefully the whole scene, and into whose soul, familiar with cruelty, and hardened by battles without number, there entered the full assurance of his innocence and his high spiritual dignity. He glorified God, saying, "Certainly, this was a righteous man"; or, as another Gospel has it, "Truly, this was the Son of God."

In all these sorts of character, how clearly the principles of human nature, of custom, education, class, nation, the grades and hues of moral life, stand out, and in what perfect keeping and harmony are they detailed, — without confusion, exaggeration, or anger! No malice or spite is expressed against one of the enemies of Jesus. The degenerate Christians of a later age persecuted the whole nation of the Jews, because they belonged to the race that crucified their Redeemer; but the serene Apostles and Evangelists speak of it as impersonal agents, and do not judge even the personal actors, except by the clear narrative of their awful crime.

We see — and it is the fact to which I have wished all along to call your serious attention, as a very remarkable one — that here was no unusual malignancy of sin, no desperate and unheard-of wickedness. Satan did not then break loose from his chain in any unwonted license. Jesus fell a victim to just such passions and appetites as are rank and fresh in all our bosoms to-day, to just such sins as now keep carnival in all our cities, — prejudice, bigotry, want of moral courage, love of money,

cruel punishments, guilty contempt of man, and haughty insolence of office, and deadly hatred of the light of truth when it cuts across our deformities and evil deeds. These and a nest of kindred vices killed the Lord of glory eighteen hundred years ago, in Jerusalem, the holy city, and there is no guaranty that the same causes, full blown and powerful, would not to-day produce the same result in our city. These Stygian vices still rankle deep and dark in the fair bosom of the most civilized and Christian communities. The volcanic fire is still there, and, only uncover the lid, it would burst forth in fury and destruction. Mobs, Lynch-law, the bullet, and the scourge have befallen not a few of the zealous disciples of the Crucified One in our own favored day and free country. There is no evidence that, if the Lord himself should appear, "trailing clouds of glory," he would fare any better, or would not, instead of hosannas to the Son of David, be greeted with the horrid yells of Crucify him! Crucify him! We cannot blink the sad reality, that he who fearlessly teaches the truth and fearlessly does the right must expect, in a crooked and perverse world, to suffer the penalty of the world's disapprobation and persecution.

But there is a fairer, brighter picture even to this dark event. Let us welcome the assurance with hope and gladness, that the world is not all bad, not all solid wickedness; that stars, serene and pure, shine even in this blackest midnight of history.

Such superhuman goodness as that of Jesus could not by any possibility be wholly destitute of friends in that hour of shame and agony.

There was Simon the Cyrenean, who bore the cross by compulsion; but who afterwards became a believer, if he was not one then.

There was a group of the daughters of Zion, with a great company of people, who followed him with tears and lamentation, and watched him afar off.

There were friends, and among them women, that had followed him from Galilee, and ministered unto him, —

“Last at his cross, and earliest at his grave,” —

who dared to mingle in the brutal throng at the foot of the cross, to cheer him by their presence and sympathy, gather up in loving memories his last precious words, and fulfil his parting instructions.

His mother was there, with wonderful heroism and affection, the prophetic sword piercing through her heart. John, the beloved disciple, seems to have been the only one of the Twelve present. How simple and how beyond all fabrication that scene at the last, — “Mother, behold thy son! Son, behold thy mother!” Such was the deep humanity of Jesus, his perfect truth to all relations of earth and heaven.

And then, too, there were those other less courageous friends, men of office, property, and standing, who were round to bestow those honors on the dead which they were too indifferent or timid to grant to

the living, a form of character not unknown at the present day. They took care that he whose word, while he was alive, had powerfully moved them, but whom they did not venture, for fear of the Jews, openly to follow, should be honorably buried.

The relaxed body, still bearing the marks of the death-agony, but gathering up in the face, we may suppose, which is the index and mirror of the soul, radiant tokens of faith and love, such as the world had never seen before, was lowered from the bloody cross, and laid reverently away, by friendly hands, in the new stone tomb of Joseph. None had lain there before, and so there was none to confound with Jesus, and lose the identity of his resurrection. It was stone, cut in the living rock, and there could be but one entrance. It was sealed and watched, and no body-snatcher could steal it, no deceiver exchange it for another, or for a living person.

All is now over. This ripple in life's waters has subsided, and the prospect is that the vast stream will flow on as before. Another fanatic has added his name to the list of failures, and sunk to rise no more.

True, alarming portents are abroad. This darkened sun can be no eclipse, for it is not the right time of the moon. Earth quakes, the dead rise. The vast throng, that are always attracted with a strange and horrible fascination to such scenes as executions, now return home, smiting their breasts with mingled passions of terror and grief and indignation. They who went to scoff remained to pray.

Where but in such scenes should we have seen, not only the deep places of human nature laid open, but all the strength and tenderness of Jesus exhibited, his forgiving, mild, humble, but firm, true, and exalted spirit. There was agony, terrible agony; for crucifixion is ingeniously contrived to be the most cruel and lingering of deaths, striking the nervous system at a distance in its tenderest parts, the hands and feet, and leaving the great vital organs to work on in torture, until the victim dies of mere excess of pain. God, in that fearful suffering, did seem for a moment to have deserted him, and his loud, strong cry broke forth, — and it stands recorded as an everlasting testimony to the unflinching truth of the writers to record all that was important, whether it told for, or seemingly, not really, against, their Master, — “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!” But the soul resumed her control, and he resigned all into the hands of the Father: — “It is finished!”

The Cross sums up, my brethren, the substance of Christianity; not in the cold and literal sense of a sacrifice, but in a spiritual sense and a moral and immortal power. God teaches us not to exact an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, and he does not do himself what he forbids us. The cross is the bright revelation of God's care and interest in man, his love for the sinner, and his purpose to redeem him by like acting on like, spiritual life calling forth spiritual life. It is the glorious beaming forth of Jesus's love. The cross from an accursed tree has become

so glorified, that we now hail it as the pillar of our faith, the chief capital, rich and solemn, that stands in the architecture of the heavenly temple. It is the one token of the Gospel, highest and holiest, and it may well point to heaven from every grave and every church, too large, too significant, too heaven and earth wide to be the exclusive possession of any one sect or church.

The Cross has a most vital and awakening meaning for us. It shows us on a majestic scale, so high and broad that the whole earth can see it, that, if we teach and *live* the truth ever so faithfully, we shall suffer for it. The disciple is not above his master. The nature of man is the same, though manners and customs change. None can accuse Christ of imprudence, of ultraism or fanaticism of any kind, or of zeal not according to knowledge. He moved simply forward in the path of duty, and at the end of that path stood the grim and horrible cross. Let us not, then, be discouraged, either in faith or philanthropy, even in the opposition of the world. But by the sublime and holy death of Jesus may we be filled with a moral courage that shall never falter, and a superiority to all fears but the fear of doing wrong and displeasing our Heavenly Father.

DISCOURSE XVI.



SELF-CREATION.

FOR WE ARE LABORERS TOGETHER WITH GOD: YE ARE GOD'S HUSBANDRY, YE ARE GOD'S BUILDING.— 1 Corinthians iii. 9.

It is the sublime thought of Paul, that we may be co-workers with God. The Creator does a part, and the chief part, but he kindly gives us a part, as considerate parents let their children join them in their works, though they could often do what is assigned to unpractised hands better themselves. Creation is not finished, nor ever will be, but is always proceeding. In this progressive system, man can put in his hand, and make or mar, as his intelligence and principle, or his sinfulness and ignorance, may decide. He is placed in the midst of an infinitude of materials. The dwelling-place into which he is born has its frame and furniture prepared to his hand, but the finishing is assigned to him. Nature is a wilderness; he is to make it a garden.

If we look at the material creation, we see many illustrations of this truth. The elements are in a rude state. The rivers run waste to the sea; the

ocean rolls a vast desert of waters round the world ; the forests grow and decay, and furnish nourishment for new generations of the same species ; the fire is a hidden force, and the lightning plays apparently at haphazard among the clouds. But God has delegated to man, as his vicegerent on the earth, the power and skill, within certain humble limits, of using these unwieldy and fearful agencies, and carrying out the plan of their creation. He navigates the ocean, builds mills and boats on the rivers, uses the fire for his comfort, and sends his messages by the lightning. Here is the office of man as a co-worker with the Deity. He is bound as by a solemn duty to be a fellow-laborer with God. The creation, humanly speaking, may be said not to be complete till he has put his hand to it, the hand of use and appropriation.

So with the animals. They are created in kind ; but the type may be improved. Man can mix, cross, and perfect their breeds. He can tame the wild, multiply indefinitely their number, and, by better shelter, food, care, and surgery, develop new excellences in the horse, sheep, cow, dog, goat. He recreates the animal world, that comes within his power. This ought not to make him proud, but humble ; kind, not cruel ; as God has placed him over the beasts of the field, the fish of the sea, and the fowls of the air, to carry out his plans. He ought to act worthy of a God, where godlike duties are assigned him, and, by his superior intelligence, care, and

kindness to animals, to show his appreciation and sense of responsibility for the trusts reposed in him.

The flowers, fruits, and vegetables all require to be improved by human skill and ingenuity. The apple was left a crab, when created, that man might do a part, and have the motive and satisfaction of doing and planning a work of his own, in perfecting the fruit. He is to soften the flavor of the fruits by culture, and increase their size and number. He is to make the flowers double that were single, vary their colors, and add to their perfumes. He is to change the desert into a fruitful field, and multiply indefinitely the useful and the beautiful in the whole vegetable kingdom. The Eden that was lost is "to be restored, and more than restored. Compare the dinner of a savage under his native palm with a Horticultural Exhibition, and we see the endless room for man to work in, and the effects of his science and experiments.

The same remarks are applicable everywhere. The forests were given to his hands uncut, the ores buried in the earth undug and unworked, the pearls in the sea, the fire in the flint, the steam in the water, the temple and the palace in the quarry. How wonderful is the creation of a city! Lately, these bricks were lying in the formless clay, these boards and rafters in the heart of the wild forest, and the stone in the ledge; but timber, ores, quarries, sand, grass, rags, ochres, are converted into paint, paper, matting, house, furniture, books. What a

magical transformation, and how unceasingly we should wonder over it, but that it is repeated every day before our eyes. Forests, rocks, and streams, moving in obedience to the fabled lyre of Orpheus, are not more wonderful than man's modern pastime with the objects and elements of nature. Slowly for many centuries the race have been travelling up to these things, and, now they have attained them, they still keep their way onward.

The arts, useful and beautiful, are thus a species of creation. Man was sent, not to destroy, but to fulfil. And it is much better for him every way, that he has all this contriving and work to do, than that his houses had been built, his ships launched and rigged, his telescopes hung, and his clothing spun, woven, and made to his order. The virtue of it is in the doing, more than in the thing done; in the exercise of his faculties, discipline, growth, capacity, self-reliance. For these kingly results any means are richly spent. Life, which would otherwise be tasteless and aimless, is made various, useful, necessary, and interesting. Man has to work, or not eat. He has the pleasure, too, of calling some things his own, and saying, See what I have done! He, too, can bear part in the benediction of the all-wise Creator, when he pronounced his works very good.

It is a great thing to learn distinctly and impressively this duty of man to be a co-worker with God. Some nations have not learned it yet; the greater

part of the human family are still children, have not yet seen that, as God has done a part for them, he has left his tools for them to work on and finish the great enterprise. The savage tribes still linger on the animal plane, fishing, hunting, eating, sleeping, warring, as if they were only a better kind of beavers, kangaroos, and lions. The landscape is but little altered, even, in the barbarous nations; the woods and hills stand in the rough majesty of nature. Only in civilized lands do cities and temples shine in the horizon of the traveller, and masts fill the harbors like a forest.

But even the civilized and Christian nations do not yet fully comprehend that a new moral and spiritual, as well as material, creation is to be called forth by man. We want Fultons and Franklins in the school, the home, and the church, as well as in the shop and field and ship, to teach us the doctrine and practice of use in the higher walks of thought, action, knowledge, and character. Civilization, the conquest of matter, is not enough; Christianity, the new spiritual creation, is to be superadded. Man has not done his work when he has made a ship, and built a house, and woven a suit of garments. He can co-work with God in the building of his body and his mind, — a divine carpentry.

Physical education is a part of this sub-creation. The body is to be unfolded, invigorated, and kept as a pure temple for the soul, with nothing to do it sacrilege. Every person arrived at man's estate is an

investment of a considerable amount of capital for the good of society. Many things have entered into his composition,—bread from the wheat-fields, fish from the seas, ice from the North, oranges from the tropics. How unspeakably important for health, ease, action, availability, and the carrying out of the divine idea in the human body, that the laws of health, growth, activity, beauty, should be followed, and the germ God gave be cultivated by man to a full-formed humanity!

As civilization is the completion of the physical, Christianity is that of the spiritual man. Guided by its rules, and animated by its spirit, he is to carry out the creative plan, to be a co-worker with God on himself, build his character up, and make it strong with virtue and beautiful with love. The Creator necessitates no holiness. Even Jesus learned obedience. Men may be innocent in childhood, but they cannot be virtuous in life without self-exertion and self-formation. The materials of this higher architecture are given in abundance. There is reason for the truth, the understanding for practical affairs, conscience for the right, love for the good, hope for progress; so that our own nature is a forest, quarry, and mine, containing all the needful means for our great work. But beside these native faculties, society and Christianity give us the tools to work with, the motives, books, teachers, to aid us in the sub-creation. We are called to be laborers with God, in no meagre plan and for no trivial results. The plan is divine, and the results are eternal.

Man is therefore placed here to create all things new, the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. He is thrown naked on the earth, like the giant of fable, that he may wrestle with its rude elements, grow up, grow strong in its varied and searching probation and discipline, and snatch grace, love, wisdom, and beauty from its passing scenes and ever-fluctuating fortunes. After the hardest part of the work had been done for him, and the materials, instruments, motives, and directions given, he is left to stand as it were in the place of the Creator, and fulfil his design. And a serious and curious inquiry sometimes arises in the mind. Are we working in all things, art, science, society, religion, as the Divine Being would, were God man, and He occupied our position? Are our lives Godlike? But in Christ this question is settled. We know his life was pleasing to God, and we know what made it so, namely, obedience to all the laws of God. He came not to destroy, but to fulfil. We must suppose, too, that the most perfect in every kind of enterprise is the Divine method and plan, and well approved by him, and therefore to be sought by man. Howard, we may believe, pleases him well in benevolence, Fulton in mechanics, Thorwaldsen in art, Leighton in piety. But, on the other hand, we may be quite as sure that other things are not God's idea and intention of a world and human society, but thwart his creation-plan. The jail, we may safely say, cannot meet his approbation, where numbers

sleep in the same fetid atmosphere at night, and mix their physical and moral impurities together, each making all, and all making each, worse and worse by the unholy contact. The hospital cannot please him, where, in crowded wards, and dusty, stifling yards, the poor maniacs mope or scream away their existence. The city cannot be the city of God, where bar-rooms stand at every corner, and entice the young, the desponding, and the weak to strengthen the chains of a desperate intemperance, — cannot be such an abode as the master hand and heart would have contrived for myriads of beings. Yet this jail, hospital, and city are our own; and we should nevertheless be provoked if a foreigner should say we were not a Christian, but a heathen city. So much more sensitive than conscientious are the multitude of men. God has made a beautiful island in the south, and bathed it with sparkling seas, and fanned it with pure gales, and clothed it with never-dying verdure. That is his idea, plan of an island. But when man transports between nine and ten thousand wretched human victims from their homes on a distant continent to this fairy scene, to toil, swelter, pine, and die on the plantations, as has been done during the last six months on the island of Cuba, we may be sure that that entered into no part of the Divine ordination. That is man's work, not God's. The fathers of our Revolution, in their conception and execution of the sublime principle of Liberty, furthered, we may say, without hazard, a

godlike thought; but when some of their descendants left that idea, and took up a crusade to perpetuate and extend human slavery, and to declare it eternal on any part of the soil of the republic, and enacted unrighteous and cruel fugitive laws to strengthen the institution, we may be equally sure that they left the Divine order of things, and took the responsibility of following their own. Man seems to be endowed with an animal impulse to defend his own life, wherever and whenever attacked, or by whatever cause. But when he joins intelligence to impulse, fabricates deadly weapons, accumulates magazines and arsenals, stores ships and forts with powder and ball, and squanders untold revenues of nations, and mortgages the wages and incomes of future generations, not to defend his life, but to gratify an unholy ambition and seek revenge over his enemies, we pronounce without hesitation the system of modern warfare contrary to nature and God, as well as the precepts of Jesus. These are some of the more glaring and notorious violations of the Divine purposes, but life is full of smaller ones. It is a great part of our duty while on the earth to weed out of the garden of the Lord the briars and brambles that overgrow his flowers and fruits.

We have seen in these illustrations how man may execute or mar the stupendous designs of the Creator. He may be a faithful, or a slothful and wicked servant. Such is his option, and many choose the evil, not the good. We have looked

chiefly at the external world, and at the evils of society; if we come nearer home, and scrutinize our own hearts, we see here a vast field for self-creation, self-formation, growth, development, repentance, reformation, self-culture, — one, too, over which we have even more power than over the elements or over society. This is our private freehold. The problem runs somewhat in this wise: Given, passion, energy; required, a spirited character and an active life. Given, a soft infant; required, a sturdy, well-formed, intelligent, and virtuous man. Given, conscience; required, righteousness. Given, affections; required, love to all in heaven and earth. Given, the wood and water, sun and shower, seed and soil; required, the garden, the orchard, the farm. Given, iron, fire, wood; required, the railroad, steam-ship, and telegraph. Given, savage Albion and the wildernesses of North America; required, the British Museum, the Crystal Palace, and New York and Washington. But these lower fabrics, on which the age so much prides itself, are but types of the higher and lasting creations of soul. We complain of droughts, we are worried and we are rejoiced at little things; and yet none of these trivial causes would move us, if we saw distinctly, as we might see, that we could win a patient endurance from the drought, a calm, soul-centred acquiescence in the will of God from every daily cross and burden, that would last when the earth itself was no more. The plan of God in all his lower creations is the higher one of soul, char-

acter, divine growth, and assimilation. Hence, the modern problem reads in large capitals, which none can mistake: Given, instinct, reason, the Gospel of Jesus; required, a new human race, a new moral and spiritual creation. From this generation, on whom the wisdom of ages has been distilled, and on whom the fulness of time has come, are required good men and women,—the patriot, the teacher, the mother, the minister, the orator, the philosopher, and, all in one, the Christian man in every walk of life,—saint on earth, angel in heaven. Thus all should begin and end in the spiritual centre. He has no string to thread the scattered pearls of his life, who does not see a divine purpose running through it, and tying all together, the least and the greatest. The wild beasts have spiritual correspondences and uses. The lion roars not in vain. Loathsome reptiles and insects come in our way to teach us lessons we cannot spare, and to give touches and shapings to the moulding of eternal characters. The end and emphasis of all things is formation of ourselves on God's idea of a human being. When we can come near that, we are wise, strong, and good. All other duties are done, and the whole world drained of its good into our souls, when we achieve that glory. The coarsest strands work into this fine web. Grass and trees link themselves at last, fugitive as they are, to the eternal. And when the joys and pains of this state go out, it is because they have led us to something higher, which has come in. When that which

is perfect is come, then that which is in part is done away. The lamps expire, because the sun has come. If flowers bloom for us, it is that they may exhale our souls like their own fragrance to heaven. If birds sing, it is to weave a note for us into the music of paradise. Fruits grow yellow and ripen for a celestial banquet. The moral and spiritual creation and character we bear with us would be found to be curiously compounded, could we analyze it, — a few tears of childhood, a mother's kiss, a father's hand laid on the head, a lover's tender word, a lesson, a book, a friend, greetings and farewells, a bitter sorrow, a bright pleasure, love, and hope, and despair, and possession. So has the character been tinged or dyed in all the soils the river of our life has run through. The uses of this fair and varied creation, of this rude and gusty world, of this dark and sinful humanity, of this solemn and wonderful history, reaching to distant ages and lands of memory, the darkening past and the brightening future of hope, — the part they all take in our self-formation, — are but faintly known and felt as yet, but they have a perpetual creative power on the soul. And especially is the Gospel of Jesus as yet but in its infancy in this respect. It has done little compared with what it is to do. It has only begun its work in the soul and among the nations. It is slowly becoming a power in the earth. But all these causes, and this, chief of all, will enkindle energies that are to act and grow, and cultivate a happiness that will flow on

like a mighty river, deeper, broader, and serener for ever.

But, my brethren, let us not forget the lesson and application. This creation is a *self*-creation, this formation is a *self*-formation. We, like the rest of God's works, were left undeveloped, that *we* might go on and carry out his creation. He would give us the satisfaction of being partly self-made, partly our own, as well as all his. He gives us means, materials, motives, guidance, and, to let nothing escape us that would be of help, he has presented the exquisite figure and spirit of a divine man, a being who lived as God would, were he, with his present intelligence and power, to dwell as we do on this globe. By all the hopes and all the fears, then, you are capable of, do not neglect this creative, self-forming work. You are to build more than houses, even character; till more than fields, souls; ye are God's building, God's husbandry. You are to be co-workers with God and Christ in this glorious work. The great difficulty is in keeping up your faith and zeal, — to carry all the hope and enthusiasm of your youth into this business of your manhood. The danger is in turning off on some by-path of your own, instead of following the way God has marked out, — in fulfilling some little, worthless, and short-lived plan of your passions or pleasures, and not conceiving and executing that diviner and more distant, but ever-growing and heaven-filling law of God. Saturn, as we see it, is but a point in the sky; but if

we should approach it, its majestic orb would be the only thing seen at last. A good life, a Christian character, seem faint and cold as the stars to the worldly man immersed in present good, and only asking that he may grow rich and live at ease; but the more it is approached and gained, the more it fills all things with its light and beauty, and from a star grows to be the sun of all. Let us keep on the line of God's creation, and all will be right in the end; the crooked arc of Time will then be found to be a part of the majestic circle of Eternity. If we follow Christ, we cannot fail to arrive at God.

DISCOURSE XVII.



UNION OF RELIGION AND LIFE.*

KNOW YE NOT THAT YE ARE THE TEMPLE OF GOD, AND THAT THE SPIRIT OF GOD DWELLETH IN YOU? IF ANY MAN DEFILE THE TEMPLE OF GOD, HIM SHALL GOD DESTROY; FOR THE TEMPLE OF GOD IS HOLY, WHICH TEMPLE YE ARE.—1 Corinthians iii. 16, 17.

THE dedication of a new temple to the worship of the One Living and True God, our Father in heaven, to the faith of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and to the coming of his kingdom among men, calls this day for gratitude and praise. We welcome it, Christian brethren, as a fresh token of the power of the Gospel, as another link in its bright chain of evidences, as another fulfilment of the promise of its perpetual and universal dominion. For human nature is ever the same; and the causes that have moulded in beauty and majesty the materials of this splendid edifice shall not cease operating until they have filled the whole earth with Christian churches. Every

* A Discourse preached at the Dedication of the Church of the Messiah, St. Louis, Missouri, December 8, 1851.

enterprise of this kind is, therefore, not only interesting to the immediate congregation, but it strikes a chord of fraternal sympathy among all receivers of the like precious faith. Hence we come, pastors and delegates, from other and distant churches, agreeably to your invitation, to join with our brethren of this city in the glad services of consecration. Know, then, that your joy is our joy, as your hope is our hope.

This house is now dedicated by public prayer, as it has already been devoted in your hearts, to the service of God and Christ. We pass, accordingly, by a ready association of ideas, to the holy uses for which it is builded, the growth of the divine life in your souls, and its manifestation in your conduct and character. Without these results, the temple and its solemnities, however imposing to the outward eye and ear, are but a hollow mockery before the heart-searching God. Far better that its foundations had slept in their native quarry, and its beams and rafters still adorned the wild forest, than that they should be drawn from their solitude and erected into this glorious fabric, only to publish to every passer-by the chasm between your professions and your practice, the discord of your faith and your lives.

“But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation.” You know, for you have been long and faithfully taught, that mercy is better than sacrifice; that ye are the

temple of God, — your bodies his building, your souls his inspiration; that the spirit of God dwelleth in you, unless you drive it out, and grieve it away; and that if the sacrilege of a material temple is severely punished, much more heinous is the desecration of the living sanctuary of the Holy Ghost. “If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”

To this Union, then, of Religion and Life, — the end of churches and Scriptures, Prophets and Apostles, of Christ and him crucified, — your attention is invited. For “the glory of the Lord that fills the house of the Lord” is not, as in the elder time, a visible cloud, — cloud of miracle, or cloud of ever-burning incense, — but the assembly of the just, the benevolent, and the heavenly-minded. Come these hither, and the charm of a sweet sanctity has already fallen upon porch and pillar, court and pulpit, and hallowed the spot as the house of God and the gate of heaven. God’s children in God’s temple, Christ’s disciples in Christ’s church, living temples of the Spirit in the house which faith builds and blesses, these complete the offering, and add consecration to consecration.

I. But as we approach our subject, the first thought is, *How wide apart are religion and life, even in the most enlightened nations of Christendom!* — how fearful the discrepancy, how unnatural the divorce, between the faith and the moral conduct of professed

Christians! This grim fact frowns upon us from every page of the history of the Church. There is blood upon the leaf, and the record of wrong and cruelty and persecution among the followers of the Prince of Peace. The Gospel has been dreadfully corrupted. Dark doctrines, at which "Reason stands aghast, and Faith herself is half confounded," have been imported into its pure creed from Jewish rabbins and pagan philosophers. The true nature of God, as One and as our Father, of Jesus Christ, as One and as our Saviour, and the true nature of man, as the child of God, have suffered a disastrous eclipse. The same tyranny that has hoarded power, wealth, and honors in the hands of the few from the possession of the many, has cloistered religion, restricted it to priests, muffled its services in dead languages, forbidden the circulation of the Bible, and reduced the number of the elect to a mere handful. The treasury of the Lord has been locked against the Lord's poor. The Gospel has been hidden away in mysteries of faith and ceremony, as if

"too bright or good
For human nature's daily food."

The Church has stood too proudly and technically apart from the walks of business and the daily lives of men, and not blended her influence with every interest and movement of society. What wonder, then, that ignorance and vice, pauperism and crime, have flooded the Christian cities like a deluge, and that war, oppression, licentiousness, intemperance,

still prey upon the fairest countries of the cross? Raminohun Roy comes from India to England, expecting to witness a national embodiment of the Gospel, and is shocked beyond measure at the distance between religion as a theory and religion as a life. Travellers cross the Atlantic to find the fulfilment of their hopes in the land of the Pilgrims; and in the republic, as in the monarchy, they witness mobs and Lynch-laws, wars of conquest, institutions of bondage, the rum-shop and the gallows, kindred cause and effect, the poor without work, and souls of God without hope. And what shall we say of Rome, swarming with beggars; Naples, city of dungeons; France, poised on a revolutionary centre; Germany, sceptical and restless; Austria and Russia, stern and despotic? Two millions of bayonets keep the peace and crush the soul of Europe. The timid, or the unbelieving, looking at these things, ask in sorrow, or in scorn, Are these your Christian nations, then where are the Pagans?

While, then, we dedicate this house to Christian faith and worship, we do it not as a solitary and final act, but as one means of uniting them in closer bonds with human life, of reducing principles to practice, and dissipating the shame and scandal of Christendom. It is not denied that, so far from being a failure, Christianity has done an immeasurable good to mankind, and won its way, against mountains of opposition, to a world-wide diffusion. It has taught and nurtured and raised to heaven a mul-



titude which no man can number. But by being perverted from its original purity, by "the shortening of its commandments and the lengthening of its creeds," by the separation of piety and morality, and by the decrying of good works, as neither cause, condition, or occasion of salvation, Christ has been wounded in the house of his friends. Men have gone on sinning and suffering and dying in one sphere, while he has shone bright and sunlike in another. "Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there?" asked the Hebrew prophet; "why, then, is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" Yes, the balm and the oil and the wine are there, but the priest and the Levite have passed by on the other side. The resources of the moral creation, like those of the material, are not yet half laid open and applied to use. A few simple principles of the natural world, reduced to practical application, have piled the Crystal Palace with the choicest works of beauty and use. In like manner, the incorporation of the sentiments of the Sermon on the Mount in the life of the family, the individual, and the state, will yield those pure and heavenly forms of character before which all material works grow dim. The riches of Christ are inexhaustible.

Spiritual Franklins are arising to teach us this philosophy of application, this Gospel economy, that shall convert to human welfare the storehouse of truths and motives and principles in the word of God. Robert Raikes gives us the Sunday School;

Worcester, the Peace Society; Father Matthew, Temperance; Channing, Freedom; Tuckerman, the Ministry at Large; Dix, the Amelioration of the Insane; Mann, Common School Education, — all but radii of the central light.

One age has one work, and another another. Ours would seem to be, to unite life and life's law and love, to blend in harmonious action the highest spirituality and the common duties, to show the child of earth how he can live like an heir of heaven. Let it not be supposed that we are engaged as a Christian denomination chiefly in the disagreeable work of controversy, in exploding antiquated errors, but, in common with many other Christians, in the practical application of the Gospel to the institutions, habits, and customs of men. This is our future, and, we believe, the future of the Church Universal. The most noxious of all errors is the practical one that salvation is effected by some diplomacy, some machinery, the performance of some priestly office or set action, not by the domestication of wisdom and love in the heart and conduct; for, though good works are not the cause of salvation, that being the free, unpurchased mercy of God, they are the conditions of it, as the parable of the Judgment bears witness. If the different sects of Christians would consent to adjourn for a time their conflicts, after the manner of the ancient "truce of God," and expend their energies in ameliorating the condition and elevating the character of mankind, and they should

find, after one century spent in the godlike work of trying to make men better, that they have any appetite left for bickering and quarrelling with one another, it will be time enough then to resume their weapons and renew the combat. But they will then probably make the happy discovery, that while they have, by practical works of benevolence and righteousness, been drawing nearer to the great Exemplar, "who went about doing good," they have been also drawing nearer to one another.

II. There are two principal considerations to enforce the union of religion and human life; viz. *that thus only can religion have reality, or life have sacredness.*

1. *We plead for this union for the sake of Christianity.* To be real and true, in the highest sense, as embodied by man, it must be rooted and grounded in the experiences of the heart, and acted out habitually in the life. It may exist indeed as a sentiment, as a creed, as a history, or as an institution; it may be written down in a book, built into stately architecture, sculptured in marble, or represented on the canvas. Much of the existing Christianity of the world rests contented with these manifestations. But neither in literature, art, or material form can it have any exhibition so like its own divine nature, as in a human soul, fashioned and inspired by its truth. The humblest Christian believer is a grander temple of the spirit than St. Peter's. "Ye," said Paul to the Corinthians, "are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men."

Nor is this principle of faith, truth, goodness, an option with man; it is a necessity. "For it is not a vain thing for you: because it is your life." It is not only the reality and substance of life, but its inmost, indestructible reality. It is the life of the life. For the soul, with immortal eyes, looks beyond wheat-fields and warehouses, and yearns without ceasing for a more substantial inheritance. Give it Californias and Australias of gold, give it worlds, and its hunger would still be unsatisfied. But give it the Gospel, and, through the Gospel, God and Christ, and it inherits the earth and inherits heaven. By that title, all belong to the soul; whether "the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come," all are the soul's.

It is the office of our earthly discipline not to unsettle, but to confirm, this essential reality and possession. For though the religious life will have its rare moments, — its Transfigurations and its Pentecosts, its Sabbaths and high festivals, its song and prayer rising to heaven, its rapt communings with the Infinite and Eternal, — yet these occasions will become all the more real and healthful, when they are the bright foreground to a background of duties well done, and trials well borne. The hours of our devotion and meditation may carry up our souls to heaven, but they have a blameless sincerity and joy only when no ghosts of neglected trusts or abused powers rise up to haunt us with their terrors. So ought the lowliest domestic or social duty and the

noblest thoughts of God to act and react upon one another. So ought our piety, putting aside its monkish garb, to enter into the every-day life of the school, the shop, the street, the field, the boat, wherever we go and whatever we do. Wherever God is and the soul, there is duty, religion, and there may be heaven. The sphere of the Gospel is as broad as life. It makes man man, and woman woman. It knocks at the door of every human heart, and it asks to enter in, not as a guest for one night, but as an intimate friend to abide, assist, and love for ever.

In our country especially, and in its newest parts, Christianity, in order to be real to men, and to continue to command either their faith or respect, must be embodied in this way. We know of no religion able to control a republic but this, for no other establishes so strong a law within, and thus supplies the place of external force. Something must really govern mankind, — if not sceptres and swords, then truths and principles. And we know of no other form of Christianity which will eventually be capable of maintaining its hold amidst the free working and wide range of our institutions, but that which is reasonable, liberal, and progressive. It is here to put forth new energies for the demand of the times. Where knowledge and power and wealth are open to all, — where we “call no man master,” — amidst this brilliant outburst of arts, sciences, literatures, and civilizations, with so many interests to hurry us away to a superficial life and drown in the noises

and discords of worldly activity the eternal voice of conscience, — here we erect a new altar to a rational and practical faith, as the only power in the universe, short of the direct interposition of God, which can sanctify and save us. But the increase of crime, incident to the waking up of the human mind to a new action and ambition, the coming upon the stage of restless, gigantic republics on both sides of the ocean, admonish us that new tests and trials of this faith are to come, and that this is no hour, when all the world is wide awake, for the watchman on the tower to sleep, so that, when asked, "What of the night?" he cannot answer, "The morning cometh."

But so far from fearing the decline and fading away of the Gospel, while the world is becoming republican, and the earth is resounding on land and sea as never before with the stir of industrial and associative action, we hail this as the very age and sphere in which it is more fully to show what it is, and to wear a still brighter crown of power and honor. When men possess their rights, we can more consistently call on them to perform their duties. The energy of human life will give new reality to religion. Here and there may be an outbreak of license or unbelief, one and another may write a book against Christianity that will be a nine days' wonder, but it is only a ripple on the stream. The mighty current is onward. The great humanity, instinctively true to itself, will still worship God, and have faith in Christ. Half a dozen men, scattered

through as many countries, a Voltaire, a Strauss, may make a great clattering on the outworks of revelation, and cause a sensation, as one man can alarm a whole city at night by the cry of fire; but the heart of the world remains essentially true to its religious as to its social nature, if you will give it time; and God can no more lack worshippers, or Jesus disciples, than youthful love, domestic joy, parental and filial affection, can cease to entrance the human breast. But in order to live, and do its blessed office, our religion must gain its just supremacy over the whole of life. Its realization must not be in churches, priests, ceremonies, alone, but in noble men and women, who have been formed by it, and who are the persuasive testimonies of its efficacy to save and bless. It must baptize us, not only with water, but with the Holy Ghost and with fire, and not only give us Christian names, but a Christian manhood. No, we want no cast-iron preacher, proposed by the satirist, no outgrown creeds, and threadbare forms of the Dark Ages. Give us the New Testament and the New Testament services and rites, and the spirit of Christ shall yet be the spirit of society, the star of Bethlehem the pole-star of our new heavens and new earth; and Christianity applied shall be Christianity glorified.

2. But if we invert the proposition, it is equally true. If life must be connected with religion to give it reality, *religion, on the other hand, is thus to impart sanctity and dignity to life.*

Unconnected with religion, and through religion with God and immortality by the exercise of faith and hope, how bankrupt is existence of all real interest, all true worth and aim! Talk of the dulness of religion! the life of a hermit is animation itself compared with the *ennui* of intense worldliness, the dregs and lees of a miscalled life of pleasure, the insipidity of living without the soul of life. In fact, the details immediately begin to pall on us, when we lose sight of the right object of our existence. How shall we feel it to be worth the while to prose on, day after day, doing a thousand unimportant little acts, repeating ourselves over and over again to satiety, running without cessation the gauntlet of care, hit by many a hard blow on either hand, overtaken by innumerable trials, if no higher result is to come from it at all than the same career continued to the end? A fabric of considerable dignity for the time being may be constructed on the basis of the home sentiments, on politics, business, art, letters; but if it be no more than that, the swift and silent lapse of time will fret away its beauty; and when a hundred years are told, how ridiculous are many of the pursuits which enlisted a whole generation! Now, they are of no more account than the soap-bubbles which we blew in childhood. They are gone, utterly gone into thin air, and if they left no mark on the soul worthy of its nature and destiny, it was but a waste of the substance of life for its shadow. No; we must live for more than art or

calling, home or country ; we are summoned to a nobler style of character, to live for the soul, for God, and thus in fact to live best for our art and calling, our home and country.

Life wants a restraint, and religion is that restraint. It demands an excitement, and religion is that inspiration. It needs a consolation, and religion is that comforter. Life wants a connecting staple that shall run through all its scenes, trials, and duties, and unite them in one harmonious purpose, and religion is that staple. It is the golden chain, let down from heaven, to draw us upward. Religion is a *religatio*, a re-ligament, a binding again of what had been severed, a reconciliation of God and man, a union of the duties of time and the destinies of futurity.

Hence, if religion be abstract and visionary without its application, life is grovelling and mean without this correspondence with the skies. To separate the two is in fact like reducing the air to its component elements, and attempting to breathe the exhilarating oxygen of faith alone, that would drive us into insanity, or to inhale the heavy carbon and azote of the world alone, which would be equally fatal. "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

Let it not, then, be thought that there is anything impracticable or Quixotic in this union. Nothing, in truth, is so practical as Christianity, for nothing enters so deeply and vitally into the heart ; and it is

in the heart we are happy or miserable, live or die. Houses and lands are not practical, gold and silver are not practical, compared with that which weaves itself into the texture of the inner and immortal man, which thinks with our thoughts, and feels with our feeling, and which when a thousand ages have rolled away will be as young and elastic as ever. Milton's eyesight was a blessing, but when he lost it, he could still retire within, and be glorious and happy. He is the real fanatic who loses his soul to gain the world, not he who loses the world to save his soul.

The practical character of religion is also shown by the fact that every-day life, as much as any art or calling, has its highest law, in a word, its ideal, and that to be spiritually-minded is but to act up to that loftier standard in every thing, thought, action, progress. Why, then, should not every one hasten to do whatever he is doing in the best possible way, so that he may "make e'en servile labors shine"? In this sense, all things have or should have their religion, or supreme law. There is a religion of the purse and of the pen; a religion of the table and of the toilet; a religion of the kitchen and of the parlor; a religion of eating and of drinking; a religion of the closet and of the street; a religion of home and of the boat and car; a religion of books and of buying and selling; a religion of church and of the market; a religion of getting and of giving; a religion of night and of day, of summer and winter, youth and age; a religion of riches and poverty, of man

and woman, of president and people. For it is plain, that, when into all these scenes and relations a right spirit of wisdom and love is borne, they can each yield some separate and peculiar good. They in fact are the rounds of the ladder, whose foot is on the earth and whose top is in the clouds, by which we make our way upwards. The circumstances and accidents of our being are not excrescences and impertinences, which we are to bear with impatience and get rid of if we can, but they are the door of opportunity through which we are to pass on. Rightly used, they are steps of moral culture. And we can justify ourselves in none of them, in which our best self, our highest spirituality, may not enter and domesticate itself; else we wound the integrity and sincerity of our Christian consciousness. These are the very places where the law of Christ should bind closest, and the love of Christ glow brightest and warmest. This is the true office of his every precept, every promise.

Mrs. Child remarks in one of her letters : * “ Every thing about war I loathe and detest except its music. My heart leaps at the trumpet-call, and marches with the drum. The instinct awakened by martial music is noble and true; and therefore its voice will not pass away; but it will remain a type of that spiritual combat, whereby the soul is purified.” If Christianity were more fully recognized as the grand inspirer and motive-power of the soul in

* Vol. I. p. 9.

its life-battle, it would be relieved of much of that gloomy and depressing air, which is associated with it in the minds of the young. It is so much more frequently held up as a restraint from evil, than a prompter to good, that it fails to nerve and cheer the soul, as it might, in the conflict with temptation. The immortal is not fully aroused to action. Men creep about in their tortuous ways and prey upon one another, when the law of God should be pealed in their ears, authoritatively, not to terrify, but to wake up their spiritual energies. It does us great good simply to hear a moral truth stated, for it goes sounding on through the chambers of the soul, until it calls up every sleeping faculty. There is faith and truth enough in every man to save him, if they could be converted from cold abstractions into vital motives. We must fight the good fight of faith. We must not slide into this easy indulgence, this fatal acquiescence with the world as it is and ourselves as we are, but, with a stiff and stubborn will, strive, in the words of Alfred the Great, "with all our might to right every wrong." Our resolution must have an edge to it, to cut through opposition, and life, which must ever be a conflict, losing or gaining, will not then prove a defeat, but a glorious victory. The praise of a genuine good man and Christian hero is on every tongue, but how few aspire and toil to be like him! We eulogize and canonize dead saints, but that is idle unless we labor to make living ones, which would be far better. As we look on a serene

and holy face of Fénelon, or Channing, we exclaim, how beautiful, how angelic! But do we not hear the call to put every day one more line into our engraving of the divine, to bring out in fuller expression the spiritual, to soften some rugged feature, to seize and fix some new beauty, and to transform by little and little the image of the earthy into the image of the heavenly? For the work of works is this, to mould the features of the soul more and more distinctly after the lineaments of the Heavenly Father.

The lesson from all which tenor of remarks is, that faith is not to end in faith, nor prayer in prayer, nor churches in churches. They are modes and motives to marshal and inspirit the soul in its battle against sin and evil. We read that in the time of Jesus "the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them." So now he spiritually opens the eyes of the blind, and restores the lame and halt, who come to him in the temple. Christianity has no greater office than to make good men. Jesus came to save men from their sins, not in their sins, and from further sinning. He came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly, the ever-increasing life of the spiritual and immortal nature.

The dedication of this Church, in which both pastor and people have taken so deep and effectual an interest, the consummation of your labors, and the answer to your prayers, fixes a date in your lives which you can never forget. May it prove the dawn

of a still more luminous exhibition of the power of the Gospel over your characters, and its unsullied reflection from every part of your existence!

For in what part or point is not the necessity of the union of faith and spiritual obedience marked as with a beam of light?

Take *the Duties of Life*. What an intricate and infinite network is spread out before us! Duty, duty, everywhere, and always duty! Its bell is ringing every hour. At home to our families, abroad to society, evermore to God and the soul. We awake in the morning, and duty stands by the bedside to lead us forth to the new day. We retire at night, and duty bends over our pillow, and hearkens to our prayer. How inexorable the demand on our attention, will, memory, resolution, not to fail in any obligation! "Who is sufficient for these things?" Only he who has married in closest wedlock his religion and his life. Then, whether we eat, or drink, or whatsoever we do, we shall do all to the glory of God. We shall present ourselves as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service.

Take *the Trials of Life*. No home, no heart, however pure and happy, can claim exemption. They are the lot of man, they are the appointment of God. Every circle has its martyrs, every life has its cross. But trials without religion descend on the human heart like a sword on the unshielded breast. There is nothing to parry the blow, nor to heal the

wound. Revelation only can point with assurance to heaven while standing by the open tomb, and show the vanished forms of the loved and lost embosomed in a celestial sphere. The Gospel only comforts, the Gospel only heals the broken heart. That alone has the discrimination, when "God sends his darker spirits down," to discern that they too are a part of the infinite heavenly hosts.

Consider *the Temptations of Life*. They are around and within us, and close about us on every side. If we go forward, they are there, and if we retreat, they ambuscade our path; some, dark and dismal to terrify; some, clothed as angels of light to deceive; some, devils to repel; some, sirens to allure; some approach gradually, and some spring upon us with a tiger's leap.

"Beware of all, guard every part,
But most, the traitor in thy heart."

Without religion we step into pitfalls with unwary feet, and slide in slippery places. But at the touch of that Ithuriel spear, evil and sin are unmasked, and stand forth in their native deformity. The word of Christ can disarm the powers of the world, and say to the most formidable, Get thee behind me, Satan.

But life is not all duty, trial, and temptation; it also has *its Joys and Prosperities*. And herein quite as much as in the other do we need the wisdom of Christ. For then joys will be joys, not sorrows in

gay masks ; joys that leave no sting behind ; joys in principal, giving fuller joys in interest ; joys leading on to brighter and eternal joys.

Come then, thou Gracious Influence of the Good Spirit from above, and unite with the soul — “a traveller between life and death” — in its passage through time to eternity. Let Life give realization and development to Religion, and let Religion give sanctity, aim, and strength to Life. Neither can fulfil its design without the other. The more thoroughly life and faith are inwoven, the more worthy is life, the more glorious is religion. Let us not say, Business is business, and religion is religion ; and think to serve God in one, and Mammon in the other. But rather let us say, Business is religion, or may be made such ; and religion is business, our higher, life-long business, “our being’s end and aim,” covering all places and pursuits, going with us by day and resting with us by night, abroad and at home, the main-spring of the whole man, and moving head and heart and tongue and hand. It is the friendly office of that holy faith, to which we now devote this church in all its parts, uses, and influences, to be the teacher of our duties, our comfort in sorrow, our bulwark against temptation, and, after being our guide all our journey through, to hover on angel wings over the bed of death, and lead the departing spirit home to the Heavenly Father’s mansion.

DISCOURSE XVIII.



THE BLESSINGS OF A DAY.

THIS IS THE DAY THE LORD HATH MADE; WE WILL REJOICE AND
BE GLAD IN IT.—Psalm cxviii. 24.

THE blessings we receive from the Giver of all good are so constant and numerous, that it requires an act of attention and abstraction to feel their steady and copious stream. Hence we may gain a more vivid conception of them, and be quickened to a livelier gratitude and a more faithful use, by surveying them in detail rather than in the mass. For what we thus lose in magnitude and number, we more than make up by distinctness and strength of impression. One insulated gift of the vast throng will send a thrill through the veins, when “the multitude of mercies” only wakes a vague and passing acknowledgment of the goodness of God.

“The blessings of a day” is the subject to which your thoughts are now invited. The gifts of the year are commemorated by an annual festival of Thanksgiving. The favors of a lifetime are reviewed

on our birthdays. The Sabbath bespeaks our attention to the providences of the revolving weeks. But how seldom do we reflect on the blessings of a day, a single morn and noon and eve, one day, to-day. Can we enumerate them without striking a deeper note of gratitude, and kindling a higher flame of resolution and responsibility ?

A Day, what is it? A space of light between two mountain-walls of darkness ; a time of redemption from the kingdom of Chaos and Old Night ; the half or the two thirds of life really given us to live ; the season of consciousness, duty, trial ; the end and aim for which sleep is given, and the veil of temporary oblivion and rest spread over our faculties so many hours. Wonderful and rich, far beyond the line of our usual appreciation, is the gift of a day. It stands like a monument between the eternity of the Past and the eternity of the Future. All ages have been employed in bringing it forth ; all the solar and supersolar revolutions from the birth of time have been concerned in its production ; and it will leave in turn its eternal mark on all that is to follow, fibres and filaments of influence radiating from its humble hours to the whole circumference of our ultimate being. The deed we do to-day shall be as everlasting as God. When the stars go out, and the sun flickers in his socket, the thought, the feeling, the fancy of this day may blaze on the tablet of memory fairer than the aurora, brighter than the noon, or frown black as midnight.

One day! It is little; a fugitive twenty-four hours, a hurried routine, a mill-horse round of cares and toils, a succession of meals, — breakfast, dinner, supper, — a miniature life, “rounded with a sleep,” a daybreak of childhood, a morning of youth and hope, a noonday of manhood and activity, a twilight of age and pensiveness, a night of death. How quickly it is here, how soon it is gone! We have but time to say it is to-day, when behold it was yesterday!

But in this very shortness of a day we discern a benevolent intention. Constituted as we are, we could not bear the burden of a double day. Literally, our “strength is according to our day, and our day according to our strength.” They have been weighed and balanced by a sure Hand, one to the other. Where, by reason of position on the earth’s surface, the day is lengthened to weeks and months, the inhabitants are yet obliged to do honor to the twenty-four hours’ rule, and make their artificial night for rest, though the sun is still above the horizon. So marvellous is the adaptation of every part of our being to every other part. The Wisest and Best has attempered all things together, set one over against the other, written on all the providence of compensation, and made everything beautiful in its season, — the night after the day, the winter after the autumn, yea, death — solemn, mysterious death — after life.

The element of which day is made is the most

wondrous and enchanting of all objects in the universe. Well sung the poet,

“Hail, holy light! offspring of heaven first born,
Bright effluence of bright essence increate.”

It appropriates to itself exclusive possession and use of the leading sense of sight. The eye for light, and light for the eye. How kindly and how exquisite the harmony! for, with a little more vividness in the element, or a little more rigidity in the organ, the pleasantness of nature would have been turned into corrosion and anguish, or dull insensibility. The light is the natural nourishment and strengthener of the eye, as much as food of the stomach. We awake every morning by the stimulus of the light addressed to this sense, a law as sure and regular as that of gravitation. Hapless they who, by unnatural customs, turn night into day, and day into night! Hapless they, too, who maintain in their houses an artificial night or twilight through all the sunny hours, and admit none of the life-giving beams of the heavens! Sweeter to sense and soul is the shining of the sun than any manufactured light of man's device. The *solar* lamp, in the quality, as in the quantity, of its light, is but a poor parody on its illustrious namesake. The moral effect of the light, as it comes out of the deep darkness, has been the poet's unwearied inspiration. The first faint gray in the east, the deepening blush of the sky, the glowing crimson of the clouds, — splendid heralds of

the great monarch of the heavens, — the golden edging of the hills, the emerging disc, the infinite pencil of beams, the floods of colorless light, filling earth and sky, touch and enkindle all our emotions of wonder and beauty.

The departure of the light, also, is as well suited to the eye as its advent. Nothing violent and abrupt, but all is gentle and gradual; and as the eyes of innumerable creatures were opened in the morning by a law, so do they droop and close by a like beneficent law. The twilight of the west is as full of moral suggestion as that of the east, and the day which began in glory in glory is ended.

The mechanical arrangements by which the day is made, the position of the earth and the sun, and their respective revolutions, and those of the other planetary and celestial bodies, the nature of the influence exerted on us by the sun through light, heat, and electricity, and other elements, too subtile and delicate for our coarse senses to take cognizance of them, all are indications of the Fatherly care over us, and fitted to assure us that “this is the day which the Lord hath made,” and to inspire us to “rejoice and be glad in it.” Can the Mighty One have brought into existence so magnificent a Creation as a day, without designing to subserve by it some wise and noble end? How great is our folly if we are stone-blind, through indifference and dull habit, to this varied and charming spectacle! How great is our wickedness, if we darken God’s hours of glorious

light and beauty with black and selfish deeds, works of the night, not of the day!

○ We are a utilitarian people and age, and we anxiously ask what we shall eat, and what we shall drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed. Why should we not perceive that beauty, too, is a part of life, of virtue, of happiness,—that beauty has its priceless use? The day would be a far dearer and lovelier gift from their Creator to many, if they opened their senses and souls to receive the clustering lessons and suggestions of grace and kindness and beauty which the whole dispensation is fruitful to convey. Its language seems to be, Sons of men, behold the wonderful works of the Almighty. The day is no accident, no happy jumble of elements. “This is the day which the Lord hath made”; none but an Infinite Power could call into being such a wonder. Its aurora is a painting of the Artist of all grace and glory; its light seems to be the nearest resemblance to his own spiritual essence; its scenery of earth and sky is ever new, no two days being just alike; its blows of toil are the striking of the flint to bring out the sparks of inextinguishable fire, the flame of immortal life, from things hard and refractory. Its opening of hope and beauty, its serene glory, its busy hours, its majestic march of the sun across the sky, its heat even and burden, and then its soothing, heartfelt decline and gentle withdrawal, testify to manifold ministrations addressed to something deeper and better in us than the animal part, to

greater uses than a mere fond and superficial admiration, or an idle observation, or a low self-indulgence, or a sordid worldliness. The whole day is a moral culture, wonderfully contrived, beautifully *équipoisé* and alternated, and mercifully meant. Its glories of morn and eve, its noontide of splendor, its rich light, its stately processions of clouds, its infinite heavens of blue, are but the framework and setting to a pearl of great price, the moral significance of a day to a child of time and an heir of eternity.

We discern a most beneficent intention in the separation and subdivision of our life into daily fragments. Each night is a gentle semi-oblivion, that our past lives may not tyrannize over us, that the door of progress may still be kept open, that we may have in some sense a new and untrammelled being every day. Every night is a faint death, every morning a fresh birth. Lest we should become too coarse and hard and sensual, and habit should get the better of aspiration and resolution, once every twenty-four hours we are humbled to a state of helplessness and insensibility, buried in forgetfulness, led into the land of dreams, the shadowy coast of spiritual substances, dim sphere of our second and innermost selves, where we undergo strange metempsychosis, look at ourselves as third persons, and return to this work-day scene with a strange consciousness of things unseen and more beautiful than this world. So are we visited by spirit-messengers, and gales from other climes than earth blow over us. We can

conceive of no arrangements better fitted for the moral culture and progress of man, than these dispensations of the palpable day and the dreamy night; the hard hours of work and the vivid sense of existence and personality, and the soft veil of darkness, unconscious repose, and grotesque and gigantic shapes of terror and beauty and ideal phantoms. Night and sleep and dreams are for more than the body, they point to sublime moral ends, and the hours of repose are farther from being a lost portion of our life than much of what we call our conscious existence. Strange to say, this very process of steeping our senses in oblivion, and arresting every active power, and locking up the body in the dark and silent tomb of night, instead of weakening or paralyzing any faculty, gives new energy to the whole man, physical, mental, and spiritual, and bur-nishes every capacity with a lustre as of the morning light. We enact every time we awake a mimic representation of the great Resurrection, and penetrate anew into the unexpected realm of another life.

“And as each morning sun shall rise,
O, lead me onward to the skies!”

We yearn more than words can describe for the new, and every morning the want is satisfied. Another chance is afforded to repair the errors of the past. “Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” Standing on the threshold of the day, we can say, “And I saw a new

earth ; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away." Never was such a crisis, never such a combination before. All history has ripened to this point, all ages have been leading suns and systems, and man and woman, to the position of this opening day. "The Lord's mercies are new every morning." Seen by the delicate microscope of a spiritual eye, every day, no doubt, is characteristic. Not only in the weather, and the season, and the outward aspects of land and sea and sky, but in the thousandfold complexity of our intellectual and moral moods, we never are treated to exactly the same day. New combinations are ever forming, new notes entering into the song or the cry which our souls send up to the ear of the Deity. Every joy is a new joy, every grief a fresh grief. As no two men are alike, no one man is the same two days in succession, or can be the same. He is moved onward by spiritual agencies as irresistible as the planetary forces that sweep him and his whereabouts into a new spot in the fields of infinite space, which he never occupied before, and never will occupy again. Hence the glorious opportunity of progress, improvement, change of heart, newness of life, everlasting growth, forgetting the past and pressing on to the future. The true man, therefore, smitten with the love of excellence, takes care not to live so poorly to-day as he did yesterday. But he takes advantage of the gracious motive-powers that bear him onward, of the healthful vigor diffused over body and mind by the

restorative efficacy of sleep, to spring forward on the career of an efficient and Christian life with all his heart and soul and mind and strength. Short-lived days, fleeting as the weaver's shuttle, become thus to him so many strengthening links in life's massive chain, binding the soul again and again to its duty and its destiny.

The blessing of the day depends in no slight degree on the manner in which we begin it, on the key-note of the morning hour. It is well begun by the Almighty Disposer. He has glorified, beautified, solemnized its coming. He has again spoken the creative word, "Let there be light, and there is light." He gives us a new world, bathed in dew, blushing with the dawn, vocal with the song of birds, while clouds of vapor and smoke rise like columns of incense from hill and vale and human homes to heaven. Fair and gracious world of ours, we feel like saying, how sad and strange it is that we should ever forget that this is a Divine handiwork, or that we should ever abuse such royal gifts by our ingratitude and disobedience!

But we may take a hint from Providence, and copy its glorious beginning of a day, so that our virtue may not find its emblem in the early dew and the morning cloud. Raised up as from the dead, restored to consciousness and reason, filled with new vital forces, soothed and refreshed by sleep, and nourished by food, it would seem to be the natural emotion to thank the Mighty Benefactor for all these

numberless favors. Devotion is the spontaneous service of the morning. To invoke the guardian care of Heaven, and to bless its new mercies, is but a fitting counterpart to all the other beauty and solemnity and hope and renewed life of the world. For prayer is morning to the mind, its awaking from the sleep of earth to be conscious of a higher life, its fresh and invigorating entrance on a superior course of thought and action. Shall the birds arise and sing at the gate of heaven, and man feel no uplifting sentiment at the birth of a new day? How appropriate it is, when the dangers of the night are passed, and those of the day are all unknown and untried, when this may be a day of pain, or accident, or of sad news, or of prosperity, even more perilous to the soul's peace, or of fears within or troubles without, or of the deceitful lull of good fortune, or of disappointed aims, or of unrequited affection, or of change, and certainly a day of the inevitable earthly vicissitude, and steady march onward to the great Future, how fitting and true an act to bow down in humblest adoration and supplication before the Infinite Presence and Love, and to feel that this, too, is one of the chief blessings of the day,—something to be thankful for, and recognized as one of life's best hours! The devotional poet naturally sings:—

“ To prayer, to prayer! For the morning breaks,
And earth in her Maker's smile awakes.
His light is on all below and above,
The light of gladness and life and love.
O, then, on the breath of this early air,
Send upward the incense of grateful prayer!”

"Man," says the Psalmist, "goeth forth unto his work and to his labor until the evening." That work and labor, the heat and burden of the day, called, in the external and figurative language of the elementary dispensation, "a curse," have proved on long trial, and in the wide experience of a world, to be some of the best blessings of the day. Who has the pleasant consciousness of being useful? The worker. Who stores up the rich memories of many things done? The worker. Who sleeps sweetly? The worker. Who relishes his food more than the epicure? The hard worker. Who enjoys leisure? He who has used his time so industriously that he has earned a right to be idle. Who can understand the full measure of blessing in a day, but he who has so earnestly pursued its opportunities that its minutes are to him as gems, and its hours as diamonds? God has sent no superfluous hands and feet and minds and hearts into his active world. The fact that they are here testifies that they are needed, that they are responsible forces, and that if they are not poured into the channels of useful work of some description, they frustrate, so far as they are concerned, some plan of mercy. For when we look at a wilderness, a morass, a river unnavigated, a forest uncut, a mine unworked, we say, Here is a deposit of so much human idleness, here is the monument of a generation of sluggards. Heaven knows it has sent men enough into the world to irrigate Africa as a well-watered garden, and clear up South America,

and make it into fruitful farms and happy homes ; but the messengers have forgotten their mission, and spent their time and energies in quarrelling and fighting with one another. The wonder is that mankind are not poorer and more wretched than they are, after the spendthrift ways, and the wild, wasteful dissipations, wars, slaveries, excesses of every kind, with which they have "carried on" their farm of the earth. So, too, full well do we know that the moral equipment has been as well appointed as the physical, that minds enough have been inspired to think, and hearts to feel, and consciences and reasons to judge, and that every degraded nation or ignorant soul is a higher or a humbler representative of some lurking unfaithfulness far away in history. The bitter fruit of pauperism and crime we eat to-day was planted, like the sturdy old English oak, five hundred years ago. There is great work yet to be done on this planet, — continents to be reclaimed, oceans to be navigated, wild elements to be yoked to the car of human progress, acres of brains to be tilled, Augean stables of moral filth to be purified, swarming multitudes of souls to be touched to finer spiritual issues, vast social Saharas to be clothed with verdure, new and grander organizations in church and state, and family, and art and labor and literature, to be formed, that shall make our modern homes, and sanctuaries and schools, galleries and crystal palaces, seem to be but the bungling work of apprentices compared with the productions of the perfect Master-

workman. The past history of our race has its representative in the night, — dreamy, sleepy, irresponsible, fearful, often riotous, artificially lighted, addicted to passion, meteor-led night. The ages have been dark ages, and history has been profane, and the earth has not been holy land. But the dayspring from on high hath visited us, and the future is to be a day of action, usefulness, progress, as the past has been a night of preparation, dreams, and darkness.

All the arrangements and structural parts of a day bear with positive and intentional effect on human culture and discipline. The mere act of rising from a couch of repose puts our nature to no slight proof of self-denial. Every meal brings the graces of the Christian character to the test. The varied spheres of household duty, the providing of food and clothing, the care of children and of the aged, the acts of hospitality, the graces of entertainment, visits and calls, the thrice-spread table, the thrice-gathered reunion, the family talk, the daily dialogues, the play of affections, sensibilities, characters, on one another, — are not these and all things which are woven into that charmed word, *home*, to be catalogued in the list of blessings of the day? Many of the items are insignificant, and we make small account of them; they would sell for nothing in the market, and they cannot be transmitted by last wills and testaments, but, though so impalpable, they are the riches of the soul, the treasures which moth and rust cannot corrupt. They may make but little impression on us

now, but they will recur to memory hereafter; in the monotony of a voyage at sea, in a distant land, in future bereavements, in life's dull decline, they will come back, and be lived over again; old scenes, old friends, will be grouped once more in the circle of home, in the light of morning hope, in the sober eve's twilight, — quickeners of a deeper and purer love, and prophetic of a home eternal in the heavens.

But as the benefit of a day depends much upon the manner in which it is begun, so it does also upon the spirit of its close. Nature here, too, gives us significant intimations. The fading light, the setting sun, the gathering shades, are suggestive of repose, calm retrospect of the past, and a confiding committing of one's self to the Guardian of the night. The morn is full of hope, the eve is the hour of conscience. How has the day's plan been executed? What have we done, said, thought, felt, during these bright and responsible hours? What has been the prevailing tone of feeling; what the general movement of our being? No change can now be made; what has been done is done for once and for aye. But we can draw wisdom from the experience of a day, and the habitual review of our conduct, joined with a proper sense of moral responsibility, and reference to a pure spiritual standard, would do much to steadily elevate the character, and save us from the miserable self-dissatisfaction, that we are good for nothing either to ourselves or to anybody else. The night is life's pause; the day is life, and

it should be true, improving, in one word, Christian life. Thus only can it be truly human life, for to eat, sleep, walk, breathe, and work does not call the whole range of the faculties of our being into exercise. The full measure and meaning of a day of our life are first revealed to us under the Christian system, for this greatens, dignifies, perpetuates all that is most precious in the roll of its blessings. It makes the earth holy by relation to heaven, time precious by its antecedence to eternity, and man noble by his connection with God. It assures us that

“The hours are viewless angels,
That still go gliding by,
And bear each moment's record up
To Him who sits on high.

“And as we spend each minute
That God to us hath given,
The deeds are known before his throne,
The tale is told in heaven.”

Nothing, therefore, can sit as a nobler capital on the column of a day than the bowed figure of devotion. Well does the poet sound the Oriental call from the turrets of the night: —

“To prayer! for the glorious sun is gone,
And the gathering darkness of night comes on;
Like a curtain from God's kind hand it flows,
To shade the couch where his children repose;
Then kneel, while the watching stars are bright,
And give your last thoughts to the Guardian of night.”

Thus conceived, thus used, and thus concluded,

the blessing of the day will be complete. And then when all our days are thus numbered and finished, their memories will not rise up like troubled ghosts to haunt us, but they will come back, a long procession, and bend over the dying pillow, and stand around our spirit like the forms of angels, sweet, serene, and holy, and gently guard us through the dark valley of the shadow of death to the blessed regions of Everlasting Day.

DISCOURSE XIX.

CHRISTIANITY A WANT OF CIVILIZATION.

WATCH YE, STAND FAST IN THE FAITH, QUIT YOU LIKE MEN, BE STRONG. — 1 Corinthians xvi. 13.

I READ in a newspaper the other day this paragraph: "A young lady, aged nineteen, in a boarding school in Massachusetts, committed suicide last week by drowning herself. She left a note, stating the cause to be want of friends, and the trials of life."

It led to a train of reflections. We look through a keyhole into the deep heart-world. Here is a tragedy in few lines. Here is a biography, which contains, on a small scale, all the substantial truth which is developed on the immense outline of the greatest names of history. And how pathetic and heart-melting it is! What a face-to-face glimpse it yields of life as it is, perhaps of some moods of our own hearts! For it is a remark of some author, that there is probably no one that did not at some time meditate the same act. How much more is going on in the human heart oftentimes than we suspect! What a glowing world of fire, a central conflagra-

tion, buried in seemingly cold natures! Or what deep interiors, fountains of life welling up with ceaseless flow! There are more things in man than are dreamt of in our superficial materialistic philosophy. There is a whole cluster of lessons suggested by the hasty glance which we get into the human heart in these few words, — “want of friends, and the trials of life.”

Many mistake, and think themselves alone in the world, when they have many warm friends. The young in their flush of impatience sometimes accuse the world of coldness, when the charge is a fiction, not a fact. If they falter or fall, how many hearts are wrung with anguish of which they think not! It is an ill habit to suspect our friends, that they are not friends; — nothing will sooner chill their love to us than such suspicions. Faith is a condition as necessary to friendship as to religion. Let us be thankful for friends. Let us ever believe that we have far more than we deserve. Instead of murmuring that we are not more loved, cared for, tenderly nurtured, let us remember how many are desolate in the earth, — how unworthy we often prove ourselves of the least of God’s favors, and especially of that richest, dearest, most exhilarating of all life’s cordials and elixirs, love, love, love!

Then “the trials of life,” — bitter and hard they often are; — it is no child’s play we are set at in this world; the game is Olympic, tragic, celestial. But they have been the common lot. Let us not sup-

pose our case a singular or strange one. We drink the cup mixed for all. Let us not be cravens or cowards. The harder the battle, the more noble the victory. An unutterable pathos does indeed overflow the heart and eyes, when we reflect on all men have to suffer here,—the pain of wounds and diseases, the shocks of calamity, the bereavement of friends, the loss of property, the persecutions of the wicked, the insolence of the proud and powerful, the absence of a true faith, the misery of evil habits, the want of sympathy and appreciation, the dulness of men's occupations, the slavery to material interests,—one man being the key to a money-safe, another a spoke in some machine, another a convenience in some boat or car, another a hand, or even a finger or foot, in some field, vineyard, or garden,—the immortal subject to the accidents of his condition,—the angel harnessed to a dray. But to all this catalogue it is answer enough, that the discipline is appointed; it is no mistake, no malice, no chance. It is good to be afflicted, it is good to bear the yoke. We learn, as a greater did, obedience by the things we suffer,—the end is not now,—the end is far hence, hidden high up in heaven, there is no end, there is eternal life to come. And the disciple is not greater than his Master.

But we may say this,—that with this deep yearning of affection on one side—the hunger of the heart—ever crying, Give, give! and on the other this keen, close, and fiery trial,—dull pain, deep

anguish, unrest, or dissatisfaction, — we see the necessity of more than intellectual refinement, or art, or science, or the most graceful civilization. So that the farther the world advances in these things, instead of being able to do without a faith in God, and a hope in Christ, it wants more than ever the balsam of the cross. It is this awakened humanity that especially and imperatively needs God. The more it is called to life, the more it wants to be brought into living union with the source of true life. All this unfolding of the germs of the inner nature presents but a larger surface for injury, when we are not guarded and guided by the Highest. There is a broader and a quicker nerve to suffer, a deeper capacity to be miserable, developed by every stage of progress, and therefore an unceasing call that, with the exposure, there should come the shield; with the unrolling of the scroll of life, the name of God should be found written, clear and bright, at every point of advancement.

But perhaps there is no period when religious faith is more necessary than in youth, when the great secret of life first bursts on the soul, and we learn that our being here must be a battle. The general opinion, I know, is otherwise, — that religion is for old age, for the sick-room, for the bed of death; but with all its conceded need and adaptation to such scenes, it is yet true, that to the young heart, first stricken, first alive to life as it is, first awaking to the stern and the grand realities by which it is surrounded, no

ministration is so urgently demanded as that of a cheerful, winning, hopeful, strengthening faith, — one that will not darken life with despair, or seat a God of wrath on the throne of the universe, or mystify and perplex the heart with more doubts than it can solve, — but a calm, clear, practical, working faith, which will fill the soul with the love of God “in the want of friends,” and nerve the heart to bear “the trials of life” when they press hardest. This faith, instead of being a damper on the heart, a chill to any of life’s natural or innocent joys, is the heightener, the justifier of them all. It makes the law of life, the law of love. It makes us patient under our various trials, by showing us that they are an education, and it animates us to strive for a victory which is worth more than any worldly success. It is in the “school,” in the college, in the first developments of this wondrous nature of ours, God-given and heaven-destined, that the trial often bears hardest, and that despair is liable to settle down upon the young soul. Then the youth reads Byron, and falls into a misanthropic habit. Things are seen through a false medium. Friends are thought to be few, and those few hypocrites; the contest is felt to be hard, and the impatient spirit is ready to cut the Gordian knot by one desperate stroke, instead of carefully setting to work to untie it. Passion is strong, and principle is deficient. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. What shall save, bless, elevate, at the crisis when the first grapple between

the mortal and the immortal takes place, and the question is first put, Which will we serve, good or evil, God or the world? The mild, humane, attractive, admonitory faith of Christ, — this is a divine remedy for a human necessity, — the prescription of a physician who cannot err, of a medicine which cannot fail to cure.

This great problem of life is presented to every new-comer afresh, and he has to solve it with such aids as he can. The experience of those who have gone before is valuable, but it cannot avail until it is made *his* experience, until it is incorporated into his own mental and moral system. Every one has to learn his letters anew in the alphabet of this mystic lore of life. But though we can very imperfectly transfer this knowledge from one to another bodily, yet the inspiring and electric power of example is vast. Especially the young, who by their condition are imitative, and who look to see how others stem the tide, are capable of being essentially benefited by the animating success of those who have been called to suffer and toil, and who have won the day.

In proportion, too, as the physical resources of the world are developed, must the spiritual be advanced to keep an even pace. The glory of an age is not gold or steam, but men, true and noble men, whom gold and steam, and all science and art, have helped to form and color. Population is not the great good, but souls that are souls. If we rest supremely on this material prosperity, we shall grow coarser as we

grow larger, grope and grovel deeper in the earth as we multiply, and present a type of sordidness and grossness new and monstrous in the history of man.

Never, we believe, was the truth as it is in Jesus, in its simplicity and its power, more needed than here and now. The very action in every other direction requires more life and action here. The young need this faith, that the sharp collision with life's aches and ills may not throw them into misanthropy or despair; the strong need it, that mercy may mingle with energy, and that strength may not grow tyrannous; and the prosperous need it, that their ease and abundance may not peril their better life, and make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.

There has been a foolish fear in some quarters, that the world was going to outgrow the Gospel,—that the improvements of civilization would supersede the powers of faith,—that the press would make the pulpit obsolete, and the lyceum and lecture take the place of the church and sermon. But the symptoms do not look that way. The increase of all the agencies of reading, speaking, printing, travelling, are just as available to the preacher as to the politician, to the colporteur as to the merchant. The Bible never has had so wide a circulation among men as within the last twenty years. Its principles of philanthropy never have been so earnestly carried out in practice, nor its reformatory urged with such success. The voluntary system proves more effectual than compulsion, and love to be more powerful

than fear. If creeds and theologies and systems are dying, it is that the spirit of Christianity may more than ever spread itself and saturate society.

• But the single strong point is, that the original heart of man is ever the same, and its wants are the same. Costumes and civilizations may change, but the essence abides one and unalterable. The heart cries out for God. Man is in search after his Father, — after good, after God. He may have art, but that cannot satisfy him. Italy stands for art, and Italy is one of the most degraded and the most wretched countries. He may have science, but science cannot satisfy him. France is famed for science, but without God, and faith in him and his Son, it has no eye to see, no heart to feel, the greatest realities. He may have literature, but literature cannot suffice. Germany is distinguished for its literature, but its condition is far from a happy one, its future as far from a hopeful one. He may have power and wealth, but power and wealth cannot answer the claims of human nature. England has these, but how far is England from health and peace, and true life? He may have freedom, but freedom alone is not the *summum bonum* of life. America has freedom, but here, too, man is wayward and wretched. He is never satisfied. His mind tosses like the troubled deep, casting up mire and dirt. In all these things there is progress, art, science, literature, power, wealth, freedom, — or, in a word, civilization, — but not one or all of these can give us the key of life,

show us what is everlastingly good, and satisfy the cravings of a nature never to perish. We shall still be the victims of circumstances, unless we have something superior to these earthly instruments. The spiritual claims its birthright,—the immortal rises and seeks alliance with its Author. And only when man ceases to carry about a frail body and a soaring spirit,—one the subject of trials, and the other the inlet of hopes,—one tying him to the sod, and the other attracting him to the sky,—then, and not till then, can he cease to yearn after his best friend and guide.

The deep disease of human nature is sin. And for that disease, however it comes, original or acquired, generic or personal, slight or inveterate, there is no remedy but of the same kind, a moral remedy, the Gospel. There is a physical sin, and that must be cured by physical obedience and other means; there is an intellectual wickedness, and that is only curable by intellectual medicines, which are light, intelligence, and wisdom, or knowledge ripened; there is spiritual corruption, and that can only be curable or manageable by means of its own nature, that is, spiritual, super-sensuous, super-mental,—means and motives and powers of another sphere and another potency. Such is the faith of Christ. It is the climate to which if you send the spiritual invalid, he inhales new life and health at every breath. He cannot tell how he is cured, but he is cured. The wondrous atmosphere, so soft and pure and balmy

and invigorating, in which he is wrapped, and which enters every pore of his system, goes to the sickly part, whatever it be, and searches and tents it, and soothes what needs soothing, and quickens what needs quickening, and strengthens and heals everywhere. Many things are good for us, but a faith in God and Christ is essential. Many things grace life, add a pleasure here, enhance one there; this stands as the bread which we must have or die, — the pillar of our being, without which we are shaken and overturned, — the tie which binds us to the universe and its Author; if it is broken, we wander, exiles, orphans, fugitives. Then we think we have no friends, — then the trials of life are too hard. We are sullen, or we are mad, reckless, or stupid, and are ready for any act, or if we are restrained from overt wrong-doing to ourselves or others, we yet lose the charm and the zest of life in being cut off voluntarily from that life which is hid with Christ in God. We cannot keep too near our Heavenly Father, or receive with too earnest a heart his lessons and admonitions, or pray to him with too warm and trusting a love. And the more active our life, the more we need religion to direct that action aright. The more studious we are, and the more we know, the more should we trust, the more should we love, or wisdom will be a fatal gift, and study will only multiply our sorrows.

If I were to single out of all men desire and most labor for the one preëminent good, it would be a living and childlike trust in God through Christ.

This is a heart-possession, which cannot be destroyed by flood or fire. This is a genius of good, a reason and a wisdom, which no insanity can craze. When all else is dark, this will be a light within, and how great will be that light! When all else is cold, this will be a warmth of the soul which will not be chilled. Blessed faith of the ages, — faith of martyrs and confessors and apostles! Come and abide in our hearts, and then we shall be strong, then we shall quit ourselves like men. We shall not yield to life's trials, and we shall not be carried captive by its temptations. It is the faith to live by, and it is the faith to die by. No age needs such a simple faith more than this. No country more than this agonizes and strives to reach this confiding faith. Do we not hear the daily cry ascending from the depths of these stricken, tempted, and restless hearts of ours, Have faith in God! Have faith in Christ! Have faith in Immortality!

DISCOURSE XX.



RELIGION A NECESSITY.

FOR IT IS NOT A VAIN THING FOR YOU ; BECAUSE IT IS YOUR LIFE. — Deuteronomy xxxii. 47.

RELIGION is not a luxury, but a necessity of our being. It is not a vain service, because it is our life. Immersed as men are in the world, and conversant with tangible objects and material interests, it is difficult for them to feel this reality and absolute necessity of religion for their best life. They are too prone to look upon it, at least in its higher exercises and experiences, as something unreal, unnatural, and fanatical. They would be likely to call a man really in earnest upon the subject, and who devoted his time, talents, and property wholly to it, an enthusiast. They suspect it is a superficial fear, or unreal superstition, not the normal and most healthy condition of the human mind. They call it an imposition of priestcraft, a device of the state to keep people in awe, and make them tame and subservient to the powers that be. It is a great thing, therefore, to vindicate the necessity of religion, to take it out of

the class of follies and chimeras, and enthrone it among the substantial interests of life, and the highest of them all.

For there has been but too much color given to the presumption that religion was not deeply grounded and inlaid in our nature, but was a gift from without, a factitious culture and experience superinduced upon it, not the true working of the inmost being with all its powers. For religion has been offered to man too much as a strange, unnatural, and special thing, not as the real light of life. It has been enveloped in mystery, surrounded by a formidable array of pains and penalties, inculcated as supernatural, not only in the sanction and revelation of its truths, but in their incorporation and assimilation to the soul. Some of the doctrines taught have been such that reason stood aghast at them; and many of the observances and ceremonies have led sober and rational people to condemn without discrimination the whole system as silly and absurd. The weaker, and not the stronger minds, are alleged to be the first to adopt it. Too many persecutions have, it is said, been enacted in its name to allow it to be the cause of humanity, and too many pious frauds perpetrated to give it the prestige of honesty. The Church is rent into a thousand fragments, and which shall we believe as true? Each claims an almost infallible superiority to itself, and condemns the rest, and will not a wise man end by discarding the whole?

These may be the declared sentiments of but a

few bold freethinkers, but are they not the tacit opinions of many in the community? Do they not constitute a certain unbelieving posture of mind in great numbers, taking out of them all heart and life for the duties and services of our most holy faith? It becomes a point of fancy, not of duty; a thing to be decided by the caprices of inclination, not the law of truth. In this state of things, what a vast amount of the fire of youth, the strength of manhood, and the wisdom of age is lost to the cause of Christ and the Church, because that cause is not associated with the necessities and obligations and highest interests of our nature, condition, and destiny, as much as anything else men are concerned with, — art, politics, literature, business, — yea, far more and above all, as the central, chief pillar and prop of the temple of life! Men rush with eagerness to the exchange, but realize in going to church Shakespeare's description of the boy,

“ Creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school.”

They are punctual at the party, or the ball, but late at worship. They engage with zest and despatch in the smallest prospect that opens for making money; but if called upon to take part in the Sunday school, or in church affairs, why, that is altogether another matter; they have no time for those things.

Therefore, both for the settlement of the mind and for the practical performance of religious duty, it is

the first thing to be done to create in men a belief that religion is not a manufactured want, but a natural necessity of our being ; that, instead of its being an innate grace of temperament and constitution, which, like genius, some have and others have not, and many do without, it is the bread of life to all. No man can do without it well. No man can be living in irreligion without daily violations and injuries done to himself, which he will some time feel most sensibly, even as he feels the other trespasses upon the laws of his constitution, in gout, dyspepsia, consumption, perhaps long deferred, but surely coming at last. So must he — it is the emphatic word of Scripture, and it is the testimony of experience — who sows to the flesh, and gives no scope and culture to the higher part of his nature, finally of the flesh reap corruption. The clear-sighted wisdom of Moses detected the fact, that what men were so prone to neglect or despise was not a vain thing to them, but their life.

The reality and necessity of this divine sentiment and service of our being are capable of being inferred and illustrated by three independent lines and sources of evidence, the Nature of Man, the Condition of Man, and the Destiny of Man.

1. *The Nature of Man* bears unequivocal testimony to the necessity of religion. The current theology, making man a totally spoiled and depraved creation of God, and conversion a wholly supernatural work, would seem to tell a different story ; but

it does equal injustice to man and injury to the Gospel by such representations. Man is as well made and natured as the rest of the creation. Adam and Eve fell as easily at the touch of the first temptation as we fall. Much evil and sin, which theologians morbidly exaggerate, are but imperfection, youth, finiteness, ignorance. No man knows history or mechanics at first. No man can practise virtue without much learning. He must, from the very fact that he is finite, and not infinite, catch many falls in his attempts to walk spiritually, as he does in trying to walk physically. But this is no proof of the little, but of the great, need of religion to him. Religion is natural; irreligion is unnatural, unreal. "In scepticism," said Goethe, "is no good thing." Religion is a later development, as wisdom in general is, but just as normal as any other manifestation of our nature, art, or invention, or calling of life. All the elements are in man. Thus he naturally believes. He may not always believe alike,—sometimes in Boodh, sometimes in Moses, in Mahomet, or in Christ,—but uniformly he has faith in something. Thus, too, he naturally makes distinctions of right and wrong; his decisions on these points may not always be coincident in every nature, and under different systems of culture. In Sparta it is one set of things, and in England another set of things, that is wrong or right. But that difference does not militate against the fact of a moral sense, for no people has yet been found sunk so low that they do not

make the distinction somewhere, thus showing the presence and action of conscience. So in regard to the future, hope, aspiration, anticipation, work in all human bosoms in different degrees of intensity, and towards varying ends and objects in the boundless future, but always, everywhere, towards some ends, towards some high ideal, throned and veiled by the cloud-curtain of the future. These conclusions as to the existence of a religious nature are so invariable, that mankind grow pale with wonder and fear, as at some monstrous prodigy, when they see a whole nation turning infidel, and framing scepticism into a law, as France seemed to be on the point of doing fifty years ago ; for all nations and tribes have a religion ; all have the terms, clearer or obscurer, of the leading religious data, or elements, God and the soul, and all believe in some future state of rewards and punishments. This is the offshoot of what is in man, all men, — in human nature. To be sure, this finer nature, seeking relationship and communion with the true, the right, the high, and the imperishable, is often, in nations and in individuals, overgrown by “weeds of worldly care,” corrupted by customs and laws, tyrannized over by priestcraft and kingcraft, and buried in the fossil habits of sense and sin. But there it is, indestructible by all the floods to drown, or fires to burn, — a germ of infinite being. Even where there is no clear flame, the smoke says there is fire underneath. The Hindoo, making his offering of rice to the Ganges, testifies to the reality of

religion no less than the Christian mother, offering her child at the font of baptism to Jesus and the Father.

The notion that man is not essentially a religious being is met and confuted by all the facts of history. Not a clime or country but has had its sacred places, not a hill but has been crowned with an altar. No city of men that has not some heaven-uplifted spire, tower, pyramid, pagoda, temple, crescent, cross,—pointing with steady finger into the heavens, and saying, There is God, there is glory and bliss and immortality. Indeed, how long could any city hold together, that was not cemented by something more than earthly lime and mortar, that was not holden by the strong bonds of faith, and belief in unseen realities, and calls upon eternal powers?

As believers in a liberal theology, we think great harm has been done by the opposite system in representing religion as in one sense alien, as not springing from the depths of the human constitution, but something foreign engrafted upon it. For it is next door to giving the impression that it is unnecessary, not the only true, legitimate, and happy life of a human being. It leads men to wait till they get religion from without, as it is phrased, does not urge them to grow it from within, from those vital seeds which have been implanted by the Creator. It lulls them to remain in sin until they are specially converted, not to feel that they have religious duties every day, as much as to their families or their country. And then, too, it does the additional mischief,

that, when they are converted, they look upon religion all their lives long, not as a clearly natural and divinely constituted growth and perfection of themselves, as they were planned and fabricated by the great Artist and Artificer, but as an excrescence, a miraculous grace, a mantle like Elijah's dropped from heaven, not the customary garb of life, woven by mortal fingers, and to be worn and kept as the lawful and appropriate garment of the soul, good for every-day wear, but also to shine, spotless and white as the robe of righteousness, in higher worlds.

Banish for ever, my brethren, from your minds, the superficial error, that you can do without this higher culture and superior state of your nature; that it is well to talk about it as a fine, beautiful, or poetical thing; that it is good to build churches, and support ministers, and comfort the poor, and soothe the dying, and keep the world in order generally, but not solid, essential, necessary, — a fixed, eternal fact, rooted in us as the granite mountains are rooted in the earth, and going down to the centre. For a cry comes up to a listening and reverent ear, from every part of this complex and wonderful nature of ours, saying, Religion is true and indispensable. Reason speaks it in its yearning after absolute truth. Conscience whispers it with the still, small voice, which can grow to thunder-tones of terrible remorse when outraged. Love sighs ever upwards from this beating heart, and craves — O with what irrepressible desires! — the sure

and undecieving and all-glorious beauty, holiness, and perfection. Aspiration retires disgusted from the richest banquet earth can spread, and climbs heavenward by the emblems of the evening star and sunset cloud; and by the glory of the Son of Man, seen by the eye of faith, to be seated above sun and star on a more transcendent height of power and loveliness. O, never be guilty of disgracing your own nature and self so much, as to think that it has no higher being than this one of time, and that its thirst for an eternal good can be slaked by the broken cisterns of earth!

2. *The Condition of Man* corroborates the view drawn from his nature; for his condition is his nature in progression, in continuity. If we go over the catalogue of items of this condition, from the time of his lying helpless in the cradle till he lies helpless again in the coffin, we trace an unbroken line of religious wants. It is a great and continual hunger. For at every point, at every time, and under every combination and atmosphere of surrounding circumstances, we detect the demand for that peculiar quantity and unknown value without which we cannot work the equation of life aright, or solve with certainty its great problem. Human life, for instance, is a condition of formation, growth, education, and yet we see at once, that, if this process is not carried on according to the primal principles which are involved in the plan of the Chief Husbandman, we shall have crude wind-

falls, and stunted growths, not the golden fruit. Human life is a state of exposure to great and trying temptations, numerous, insidious, often sudden, and mysterious, springing from various parts of our nature, sometimes from the most godlike, but never wholly withdrawn, clinging around our skirts, and plucking at our virtue, and dragging down our aims and acts, until we go the way of all the earth. The commanding truths and the vivid sentiments and the impressive promises of religion can alone disperse this unhallowed brood, and exorcise the evil spirits from possessing mind and heart. The Apostle John asks with assurance, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God." Human life is also a sphere of numberless duties, and not a half-hour can pass in our conscious and waking state, when the claim is not pressing upon us; but it is of the very nature and office of this heavenly mentor and monitress to teach, inform, encourage, warn, and strengthen with interior force and fire our natures, to meet honorably and faithfully this endless swarm and combination of duties, and win the human and the divine testimonial of a good and faithful servant. Our lot, too, is one of boundless and unceasing change, — health and illness, joy and grief, poverty and riches, reverses and successes, satisfactions and disappointments, life and death, post over the scene in quick vicissitude; the shuttle carries one black thread, then one white; noonday and midnight chase one another round

the globe. Not an instant in all the years and centuries of time, but darts some fatal arrow at home and heart for some one of the children of earth; and what but a shield tempered in heaven can ward off the blow from the breast, or what but a balm earth has not grown can cure the wound when made? This is a sphere of vast and ever-opening opportunities; — chances of good, if also of exposures to evil; avenues to a larger, truer being; ways out of the straitness of present difficulties; streams of knowledge flowing around us, which ask to be tasted; ideals of excellence glowing above us, which demand to be striven for and won. Every moment may flower or ripen a noble thought, act, plan. A man can do or say in five minutes what will make him immortal. Now we may safely challenge all the maxims of mere worldly prudence and temporal ease, and the doctrines of a sensual, or a selfish philosophy, to put man up to this bent of his fortunes, and to clothe him with such a deep, earnest, and habitual consciousness of what he might become, as a creature and child of God, — how wise, how patient, how strong, how happy, that he will work unceasingly through all discouragements to attain the highest excellence of character and life! But religion, drawing upon the motives of a wider compass than earth, deeper reasons than empirical knowledge, and more enduring results than are chronicled in the books of time, can give the needed momentum. It can, and does, say, Aim high; strive

after a divine holiness and purity; live like a god in the world.

3. And then, coming to the third branch of the subject, *the Destiny of Man*, we find all the previous arguments for the reality and necessity of religion trebled and quadrupled. For this is peculiarly the transcendent realm, where her glories and her proofs likewise are to appear. If man, born out of the dust of the earth, is only earth, then let him run his wild course, and burn out his taper of life as soon as passion and pleasure may dictate. It matters not so much, though even on that theory it still matters much, what he is and does. But if he is created in the image of the Everlasting God, and called to the inheritance of a conscious being through all the unending ages of the future,—if, even in this morning of his days, he is filled and sometimes transported with aspirations, dim it may be, but vast, grand, and exalting, for sweeter joys, for purer delights, a serener happiness, a more thrilling, inward, and abiding bliss, than the rarest moments of this life have given; for flowers that never fade, and fruits that are fresh from the tree of life, and waters that satisfy the thirsty soul, and scenes and societies that ecstasize, expand, and feast the very soul;—if such is the realm of being to which this creature man is on his way, and to whose celestial city he is already lifting up his eyes, what, we ask, shall best fit him for such a sublime career? What is adequate to prepare him to live for ever?

King's sons and heirs-apparent to the throne are educated usually with great care, as necessary to the duties of the court and the kingdom, and special attention is devoted to their studies, manners, and characters. What shall fit aright these members of a more august royal family, these heirs to a more than kingly throne, these candidates who are to appear in the court and kingdom of the Monarch of all? Dumb here are the seven wise men of Greece, the sages of Egypt, the philosophers, and the moralists. They speculate well on the duties of the contracted sphere of earthly relations, but how can they speak to the infinitude of man's being; and, bound to earth, not even certain there is a hereafter, and having little clear idea of its conditions, and the general nature of its duties and enjoyments, how can the children of sense give the law of eternal life? Only what is of the same kind with itself can meet the wants of an immortal spirit, namely, an immortal religion, an immortal Saviour, an eternal God. This loftier plane of our being can only be reached by the guidance of the Celestial Visitant. Coming down from heaven, she can guide us thither, and she alone. When friends depart, and the places that have known them know them no more, — when our own health fails, and we are impressed with the consciousness that this is not our final home, — what can give comfort, strength, patience, peace? Cold then is all the glitter of art; as it is recorded of the sculptor Bacon, that he directed this sentence to be

inscribed on his tomb: "What I was, as an artist, seemed to me of some importance while I lived; but what I really was, as a believer in Christ Jesus, is the only thing of importance to me now."

Dull, then, is the splendor of wealth, for we brought nothing into this world, and we can carry nothing out. Power, and fame, and learning even, and some of the lower of man's attainments, even in the moral and intellectual sphere, are but freezing comforters to the bereaved, sick, and dying. But in these critical seasons of our being, when man is driven in from the outworks to the centre and substance of his nature, Religion utters her grand tones of courage, promise, and eternity, and vindicates herself as the soul's supreme necessity, the one thing needful, which, once possessed, can never be taken away, but will grow dearer and brighter and diviner for ever.

Religion, then, is the true aliment of our nature, the true master of our condition, and the true guide to everlasting life. Our nature without it is an abortion, full of promises without performance. Our condition without it is a labyrinth without a clew, — a dark maze without a plan. And our destiny without it is buried in hopeless gloom and blackness of darkness and despair. Then man, looking within, can see nothing that allies him to his Maker; and, looking around him, can trace no intention in life's trials, temptations, and duties; and, looking forward and upward, can discern no rainbow of hope arching

over the rayless heavens of eternity. So to believe, so to live, *is* death ; it is not necessary to exhale the last breath and be put into the tomb to die ; *this state is* dying, dying in the immortal, nobler part, shrinking into dust and nothingness in the most vital sense. O, never be beguiled by the folly that religion, the guide, teacher, inspirer, comforter of man, is unnatural, unnecessary, a trick of the artful, a pious fraud, a police useful to the state, a fear in superstitious minds ! “ For it is not a vain thing ; because it is your life.” And the more faithfully it is made our life, not a creed only, not a ceremony, or even a sentiment only, but the habitual, daily, and inner life of all our spiritual powers, the richer and dearer does life grow ; its events all descending like blessed mercy-drops in the great rain of Providence, and its lessons and trials all shining with a holy radiance in the broad daylight of the Sun of Righteousness. Seek and pray for this good, with all the zeal and industry of your nature, and they who seek shall find, and they who ask shall receive, thirty, fifty, a hundred fold. For the Great Treasury of blessings above is always full and overflowing, and we may trust with perfect confidence in the Fatherly Hand that dispenses them to the creatures of His love and immortality. As long as God is rich, his children cannot be poor.

DISCOURSE XXI.



RELIGION IN ITS FOURFOLD EXPRESSION.

THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS HATH MADE ME FREE FROM THE LAW OF SIN AND DEATH. — Romans viii. 2.

THE interesting festival of our Saviour's birth again invites us to bring our offering to the altar of devotion, and to fill these seats of meditation. We have assembled to praise our Heavenly Father for the unspeakable gift of his Son, and to reanimate or kindle the life of his religion in our breasts. As the changes of another year have gone their rounds, as Spring has strewed over nature her flowers, as Summer has matured her fruits, and as Autumn has opened her horn of plenty, we have been regaled with new beauties and sublimities in God's fair and living universe, and, it is to be hoped, have grown in those sentiments of wonder and love and reverence for the august Creator, which it is the happiness, no less than the duty, of man to cultivate. As we have gone through the mixed experiences of another year, as we have met the smiles or buffetings of the world,

have rejoiced in strength or been bowed in sickness, have bid adieu to dear friends departing hence, or welcomed new beings into life, as fresh ties or attachments have been formed, or old ones been dissolved, hapless must have been our lot and dull our improvement if we have not, swept by all these influences from without, and by the movements of God's stirring Spirit within, had new and more earnest convictions of the infinite value of that religion which shone eighteen hundred years ago in the star of Bethlehem. As we have cast our eyes abroad, too, and heard the distant murmurs, as of the ocean's roar, of the busy world, waking the echoes of these quiet vales, and peopling our fancies with scenes of other lands, — as the leaf of history has been filled up with the record of another year of follies and sins, and virtues and glories, — poor must have been our moral vision, and feeble our faith, not to have seen that what is wanted everywhere, above all things else, — in convulsed Europe, effeminate Asia, bleeding Africa, and rising America, — is that Gospel which bears on its benignant front love to God and love to man, the awe of a filial worship and the sympathy of a universal brotherhood. What but this can raise the grovelling millions, or subdue their proud oppressors? What else can stanch the flowing wounds of a warlike world, point the upward aspirations of the human soul, above the shrines of a cruel and obscene idolatry, to the Father of lights,

and turn the vast energies of advancing civilization to deeds of liberty and philanthropy? As another year, by its close and searching discipline, which we could not escape if we would, and would not if we could, has sifted and proved us; as the ceaseless tide of feeling and thought has poured along with its dark depths of sorrow below, and its bright, breaking bubbles of hope above; as God himself, in his mysterious union with us, has shined in with his awakening light upon our souls, can we have failed to see and feel that the wonder and joy and hope and beauty of the world is that religion which was enshrined in the babe in the manger, the exile into Egypt, the carpenter at Nazareth, the homeless teacher of Galilee, the victim of Calvary?

Were such in any measure, feebler or fuller, the fruits of our experience and the conclusion of our thinking, we should be ready to confess that the nature and claims and character of such a friend of man, and such a benefactor of his race, are of no secondary importance. In addressing ourselves to these subjects, we shall be aided by surveying religion under the aspects of a History, an Institution, a Creed, and a Life or Spirit; for as a History it is one of the most interesting and instructive; as an Institution, the most powerful; as a Creed, the most satisfactory; and as a Life, the most divine.

1. The History of Religion, of the religious sentiment in man, — for it is getting to be acknowledged slowly, but surely, that he has such a sentiment

deeply ingrained in his constitution, — its successive developments, its sinkings and its soarings, — forms a thrilling element in the record of departed generations. Perverted, abused, neglected, as it may have been, it never wholly went out in any age, however corrupt; any tribe, however savage. The rudest dialect furnishes terms for the two leading ideas of the religious nature, Conscience and God. The fierce Indian, the South Sea cannibal, the brutish Hottentot, the roaming Tartar, the treacherous Malay, have had their deities, their priests, and ceremonies. The sentiment of religion has been dreadfully darkened, but never extinguished. As we know that where it smokes there is fire lurking somewhere underneath, though no clear, bright flame blazes up; so these mumbling ceremonies and bloody rites and awful superstitions and silly doctrines of Paganism proclaim a religious nature beneath, struggling and reaching blindly after God.

But the interest in religion as a history is concentrated mainly in the Old and New Testaments. Natural Religion never accomplished much for the elevation of the individual, and nothing for the progressive improvement of the race. It has only glimmered and flickered faintly, except in a very few remarkable exceptions. But the history of Revealed Religion, and the biography of those who were made its heralds and examples to the world, have spread beyond the narrow country in which they were originally formed, and the languages in which they were

first written, and have spoken to almost all nations in their native tongues. As a history, what book can compare with the Bible? Dating back to the creation of the world, describing the origin of man and the growth of families into nations, painting the wholesale corruption and the sweeping retribution of the early ages, leaving the general history of the repopled earth, and tracing the progress of a single family, and eventually mighty nation, until it gained its liberty and land of heritage, and was established in the worship of one God, — where is there a volume that, for grandeur of events, antiquity of origin, and lessons of warning, not to speak of its divine Law, is comparable to the Pentateuch? Or, as we sail further down the stream, and judges and prophets and kings and poets rise to view, and the dealings of Heaven with a backsliding people are developed, — as David strikes the harp of praise, and Solomon teaches the art of life, and Isaiah kindles with the coming of future events, — we confess that here is no common volume, but one matchless and divine. But the edifice is incomplete still. A greater than Solomon, and one whom David called Lord, was yet to come. And this night, eighteen centuries ago, he was born of a poor Galilean woman in a caravansary in Bethlehem, and laid in a manger, for lack of better accommodations. What a night to the world, that was to shed more light upon the darkened earth than all previous days had done! A star pointed out the memorable spot, and choirs of angels chanted a jubi-

lant song, — “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will to men!” Peaceful shepherds congratulated his birth, and Eastern Magi honored him with royal presents. Fitting introduction to the Prince of Peace! How painful to contrast it with his dying scene, amidst insult and torture, in the place of skulls, the sun shrouded, the earth quaking, and the graves yawning and giving up their tenants!

The interest of the Old Testament centres around one people, the Jews; that of the New, around one person, the Saviour of the world. His life, teachings, and death, the writings of his disciples, and the history of his infant Church, compose a book which even the infidel has acknowledged was unsurpassed in interest by any of the works of human genius, a book which has given Art its inspiration, Literature its elevation, Society its progressive impulses, and Man his immortal hope and salvation.

The Bible is History teaching by example the noblest of truths, the highest of duties, and the purest of motives. In History, religion is personified, — lives and moves and acts and speaks so as to interest us in the art of true living. If general history is fruitful of lessons of warning and encouragement and truth, how much more we may say of that religious history which especially treats of the spiritual aspects of man’s condition, the spiritual capacities of his constitution, and the infinitude of his destiny, — which portrays God in all his love, and holds up a perfect form of humanity in his Son!

But a clamor has been raised against Religion as a History, or historical Christianity, by some modern thinkers. It is said, "The letter is trusted, whilst the spirit, that giveth life, is neglected. The Scriptures are read as a charm to keep off evil and sin, not as an inspirer of a spiritual life. More regard is paid to the historical Christ who lived and suffered ages ago, than to the reproduction in ourselves of Christ, according to the labor of the Apostle who wished Christ to be formed in his converts." There may be some truth in this view; it is worthy of inquiry whether we do not fall in some measure into the error alluded to. Still, what is wanted is not less, but more, consulting of the records of our faith; not less attention to Religion as a History, as a Biography, but more attention to Religion as a Life, as a Spirit, as a Character to be formed, and growing in these hearts, and shedding its peace and beauty over these lives. The history of religion, of Jesus, has no mysterious spell, no magic power, to ward off sin, to regenerate the soul with a divine life, by reading a chapter in the morning and a chapter in the evening, except so far as it supplies us with kindling motives, pours streams of light and hope into the soul, and summons the spiritual nature to action, life, and progress. But because the Bible is read coldly, formally, lifelessly, shall we give up its perusal? By no means. But let us advise a more attentive, feeling, devout study. For there we are taught the science of the spiritual life, we see the

way to be good, and are addressed by all the motives heaven and earth can supply, by a forgiving God and a dying Redeemer and a future judgment, to walk in the way everlasting. Whilst, then, we view Religion as a History according to its true claims, and guard against supposing that it can take the place of, or supersede, Religion as a Life, we are also to guard against that radicalism so common at the present day, which seems disposed to rank the Holy Scriptures along with the works of mere human genius, and classes Paul and John with Socrates and Plato. Religion as a History can never lose its claims to the reverence and attention of mankind. What would the Gospel of Christ now have been, but for the historical form in which it was put by his inspired disciples? Probably only a dim tradition, a lifeless fable, if it could indeed have survived the wreck of time at all, and not been utterly lost. We owe to history the knowledge of his life and character, doctrine and death, who came into the world as the brightness and image of God, to bring back and reconcile the world to the Father. That fact alone is a eulogium upon religion in its historical form, which can never be gainsaid or obscured.

2. We pass to another point, — *Religion as an Institution*. Some sects of Christians have protested against religion in this form. They would make Christianity wholly a life, a spirit. They would have no Sabbath, but make every day sacred. They

would have no church but the church of pure minds and devout souls, invisible to man, but visible to God. They would have no ministry, but let every man be his own priest, and minister at his own altar, or before the people, as the spirit moved him. The ordinances of religion they call a dead letter. But many words are not required to refute such notions. They are opposed to the philosophy of man, to the teachings of history, and the principles of the Christian religion. Religion ever has existed, and we have no reason to doubt ever will exist, as an Institution, with its sacred days, with its edifices and priests and privileges and rites and ceremonies. There is something in man that calls for these things, and will have them in every kind of religion. The Pagan, the Mahometan, the Jewish, and the Christian world have possessed religious institutions. Jesus saw what was in man, and he sanctioned Baptism, and instituted the Supper, and appointed the ministry of reconciliation. He showed his profound respect for Religion as an Institution by being himself baptized, by his attendance on all the holy festivals of his nation, by his worship in the synagogue, and participation in its exercises, and by his remark to the Jews who elevated the tithing of mint and anise and cumin above the weightier matters of the law, that they ought to have done the one, but not to leave the other undone. The institutions he established were so simple and so natural, so adapted to the wants of the human mind, that they have been

observed almost universally amongst his followers, and can never, whilst man remains as he is, be rooted up. He left room for choice and the consulting of the circumstances of different ages and nations and climates, as to the mode of performing his ceremonies, and founding his Church, and preaching and spreading his Gospel, thus making Religion as a Spirit mould and adapt Religion as an Institution to the wants of successive periods. He designed that the institutions should not overlay and crush out the life, but be at the same time the expression and the quickener of that life and spirit in which the heart and substance of true religion consist. And so, in some measure, it has been. Sensuous ages and nations have multiplied forms and ceremonies to speak to the eye and ear and imagination ; hence the Roman Catholic magnificence of worship. More intellectual and cultivated communities are satisfied only with simplicity ; hence the Congregational Institution, which relies for its power more upon ideas than sights [and sounds, which calls the individual soul into action, and to which our fathers were indebted for their system of free commonwealths.

While, then, it is folly to emphasize the institutions of religion as the chief thing, and to honor days and places and persons and ceremonies as ends, and not as means, as saving in themselves, and not as saving because they nourish a genuine piety ; whilst it is absurd to make any outward rite the all-important requisite to the Christian title, and to pass

by the weightier matters of judgment, mercy, faith, and the love of God, still, Religion as an Institution is to be respected and cherished as the embodiment, the expression, and the nourisher of the life of the soul. You might just as well say that Liberty ought to dwell in men as a spirit, and never take any outward form, never be expressed in governments and laws, and have no officers to care for its interests, to interpret and defend its enactments, and give life and diffusion to its holy symbols and generous influences, as to condemn religion in its institutional character, and decry its Sabbaths and churches and ministers and ordinances. He who fights against Religion as an Institution, fights against both the senses and the souls of men ; for, whilst man has an eye to see and a heart to feel, he will love the seasons of holy meditation, and the sanctuary of worship, and the ceremonies of a spiritual import will convey stimulus and nutriment to his immortal nature. We read of the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city, as having no temple therein ; “for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it” ; but we read of no such epoch in this state, and our Saviour never intimated that a day was coming for the abrogation of all external forms of Religion. Every age should have the forms best adapted to its condition and wants, and to seek that adaptation, and not the destruction of all outward religious institutions, should ever be the aim of a spiritual faith and a Christian reformer.

3. The next aspect under which we were to contemplate *Religion* was that of a *Creed, or Belief*. In every science and art there are certain fundamental principles, to which all conclusions are referred, and by which they are tested. But as the human mind has advanced, these first principles, as they were supposed to be, have often been exploded, to make way for others more in accordance with the truth of things. Do we not witness a similar progression in religion? The belief of the Pagan gives way to that of the Jew, to that of the Mahometan, and they in their turn yield to the Christian. The Christian itself undergoes changes; the Catholic belief is overthrown by Protestantism, and the creed of reformers themselves is superseded by a more enlightened and rational faith. Thus Religion as a Creed is ever changing, according to the wants and the improvement of the race, as well as Religion as an Institution. The world goes on reforming and re-reforming. Systems once pronounced firm as the throne of Truth itself, melt away like snows before the sun, and men never seem so much in the attitude of believing, as preparing to believe something by and by. This restless state, these everlasting changes and innovations, may be wept over, but it is wholly useless to lament them; for they obey the law of progress, the onward movements of the human soul in its unceasing struggle after light, liberty, and expansion. And it is as idle to expect any retrograde step, and the revival of doctrines once grown obso-

lete, as that the full-grown man should resume the cast-off garments of his childhood.

“ One spell upon the minds of men
Breaks, never to unite again.”

Every religious mind has something fixed and settled, a set of first principles or truths, to which it refers opinions, conduct, and institutions, as a criterion. If they agree, well ; if not, the latter are to be discarded. But it has not been duly considered by all, that these supposed first principles or truths, these standards themselves, may, after all, turn out to be partially erroneous ; that they, as well as all subsidiary points, may need examining and resettling. The history of the Christian Church illustrates nothing more remarkably than the modification of creeds, regarded by those who made them as absolutely unchangeable.

Viewing, then, the progressive character of the religious sentiment, and its new manifestations from age to age, looking historically at the mutability of human belief and opinions, we shall see that there never was a more vain attempt, or one more inconsistent with the growth of the soul and the advance of the race, than to endeavor to chain down the Christian Church to identity of creed. It never has been done, it never will or can be done. It is against the nature of man, the spirit of religion, and the law of growth. The winds cannot all be made to blow in one direction, the waters all to flow to one point of the compass. All human faces cannot be made

to look alike, all voices to sound alike, all minds to think alike, nor all hearts to feel alike. Yet all these things could just as easily be done as to make all men believe alike on the vast, diversified, mysterious, infinite subjects of religion, where there is so much opportunity for the differences of constitution, taste, education, mode of life, habits of thought, and varieties in moral character and culture, to come into play and modify faith.

The chief thing that has embroiled the Church has been this unphilosophical and unchristian endeavor to make all believe alike. It has led to war and persecution, and the most awful consequences in the list of human woes. It built the racks of the Inquisition, and lighted the fires of Smithfield. It slaughtered the Waldenses like wild beasts amongst their sublime mountains, and drove the Covenanters into caves and dens of the earth. And if there is any of this diabolical spirit of persecution yet left to rend and convulse the Christian body, like the demon of old, it is traceable to this impracticable wish to make all believe alike, believe just as we do, and to constitute it the greatest offence, and a mark of evil and excommunication, not to believe so. The object has never been, and never can be, effected. This one lesson should we learn, that, if we wish to have others subscribe to our creed, and assent to our faith, we must love them, we must tolerate them, we must bear with them long, and be kind; and then they will be far more likely to think as we do than if we make a

violent onset upon them, and drive them to take the defensive. At least, if they do not think with us, they will feel with us, and the unity of the spirit, if not unity of creed, will be kept in the bond of peace.

Religion as a Creed, as a Belief, will ever exist, probably, as well as religion in its institutional character. The history of the past, and the philosophy of the human spirit, and the declarations of God's word, affirm it. But belief will vary, as forms and institutions vary, from age to age, according to the situation and culture and wants of man. Our blessed Lord, with the far-sighted vision of a true prophet, foresaw this, and hence we do not find him, as we do some of his followers, constructing a creed for all the world to believe, on penalty of excommunication in this world and damnation in that to come. Our Lord left no formulary of belief. The true Gospel Creed is simply, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," and it is nowhere stated with precision and formality, and repeated in set words, but given in free and popular language, as the whole Bible is written. When Peter said, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God," his Master pronounced him blessed, and said, "Upon this rock I will build my Church." The creed of Martha was, "I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." The eunuch, before he was baptized by Philip, said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." And

the jailer of Philippi, when he asked, trembling, what he should do to be saved, was told to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and he would be saved, and his house. And so quotations might be multiplied to any length, showing the simplicity and vitality of the belief deemed essential in the New Testament age. But on all other points, on the thousand topics of theology that have agitated and embroiled the Christian world, no formula is laid down, but each individual and each age is left to decide for himself, assured that when there is a vital, believing, pure state of the heart, and Jesus is acknowledged to be the Son of God, there can be no very fatal error ; whilst, on the other hand, the possession of the most approved creed is compatible with spiritual torpor and death, as is strikingly exemplified in the case of the Nestorians of the East, amongst whom the American missionaries are laboring, and who, with the Nicene Creed itself, which is repeated twice every day, have become dead, paralyzed in the spiritual life. "I am impressed," says one, "with the idea that it is spiritual death, rather than error in theological belief, which is their calamity." What a satire upon the power of creeds to keep alive the fires of pure and undefiled religion are these Nestorians, a fallen church, yet repeating the Nicene Creed twice a day!

Doctrines have a place, but it is not the highest place. Trouble and sickness and death reveal the fundamentals of Christianity as consisting, not in the creed, but in the character ; not in the dogmas, but

in the life ; not in the correctness of the intellect, but in the goodness of the heart. Christians, real Christians, find that they more nearly agree as they come to die.

4. Here we arrive at what may, without arrogance or dispute, be declared as the highest manifestation and essence of *Religion*; namely, *as a Life, as a Spirit*. Religion as a History, as an Institution, and as a Belief or Doctrine, are rather means ; this, the great end. It is not enough that we read of virtue in the history and biography of the past, that we contemplate even the faultless model of the Saviour's life, unless we also copy it, unless we also inhale that living spirit of love that irradiated his life, and made even his terrible death beautiful to behold. It is in vain that the Sabbath and the institutions and ordinances of religion are observed, however punctiliously, unless the life of the soul be breathed into them, and they are used, not as being of the nature of ends, but helps to the spiritual nature, in working out, with the coöperation of God, its everlasting salvation. A creed, however tenaciously grasped, or fondly cherished, is of inferior moment to the Christian life and character, without which the most perfect creed, though constructed by all the doctors of Christendom, as was the Nicene, becomes a mere icicle, beautiful perhaps to see, but cold and freezing. Yes, my friends, unless the life of pure benevolence and piety, sublimely and boldly called the life of God in the soul of man, the life which the Son of God lived whilst he dwelt in

the flesh, — unless this holy, divine, and happy life be rising and increasing within us, gaining ever new triumphs over the animal part, subduing the passions and appetites, suppressing self-love, casting forth its aspirations towards God and heaven, ever growing with our growth, strengthening with our strength, and ripening with our age, — without this, the rest is nothing, is a shell without a kernel, a show without substance, a body without a soul. This is that law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus of which the text speaks, which made the Apostle free from the law of sin and death. This only can make us free from the evils of sin, and victorious over the terrors of death. Religion as a History cannot do it, Religion as an Institution cannot do it, Religion as a Creed cannot do it, but Religion as a Life, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, can do it, yea, has done it in how many glorious instances! Let men of all ages and climes and beliefs come forward and declare how this life gave them the victory over the sins of the flesh, the death of the body, and the fears of futurity. Let the glorious company of the Apostles, and the noble army of martyrs, and the good and true of every church and sect, bear testimony to the power and efficacy of a Christian life. Come, ye Fathers and scholars of the Church! from the caves of the desert and the mountain, from the cloisters of learned halls and colleges, golden-mouthed St. John, holy Augustine, immortal Luther, and show the divine beauty and energy of a Christian life.

Come, ye poets, Milton and Cowper and Wordsworth, who have waked to ecstasy the living lyre! ye philosophers, Locke and Pascal and Newton and Bowditch, who have penetrated the arcana of Nature! ye vindicators of freedom, Hampden and Penn and Washington, the great ones of the earth! testify to the saving power of the Christian life, under the greatest temptations, in the darkest calamities, amidst the most brilliant honors of the world, the deepest studies of science, the loftiest flights of genius, and the most animated struggles against tyranny. Come, too, ye humbler ones, but as noble, the Man of Ross, the Shepherd of Salisbury Plain, the youthful Martyn, the philanthropic Frye, and convince us how illustrious the Christian life makes the most retired occupation, dignifies the humblest benevolence, and makes the most distant country and the darkest prison holy ground, shrines for the veneration of mankind.

Whatever church we worship in, creed profess, or calling pursue, whether young or old, sick or well, rich or poor, this life, and this alone, can avail us. If we trust to any other support, it is a broken reed, and will fail us. We may quarrel about modes of faith and worship, but we must settle at last on a Christian life, as the eternal foundation; the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, as the one great essential. Without the spirit of Christ we are none of his, though we fight for his tomb, as did the old Crusaders, or fight for a creed, as do the modern polem-

ics. If we have not the life that is hid with Christ in God, we have nothing, though we hold power and wealth and beauty and every grace and accomplishment of the schools, but we are really poor, and wretched, and blind.

But when this life of purity and generosity and heavenly-mindedness animates these immortal natures, when the love of God and man kindles our whole souls, and burns with an ever purifying, living, and transporting warmth and brightness, we are delivered from the law of sin and death, earth is arrayed in new beauties, man appears as a brother, God as a Father, and death transports to other and more glorious mansions, to rejoice with joy unspeakable in the company of the just made perfect, and the society of our glorified Saviour.

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DISCOURSE XXII.



CHRISTIANITY PROGRESSIVE.

BUT WHEN THAT WHICH IS PERFECT IS COME, THEN THAT WHICH
IS IN PART SHALL BE DONE AWAY.— 1 Corinthians xiii. 10.

I ASK your attention at this time to the subject of the progressive nature of Christianity. We fervently thank God that he sent his Son into the world that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly; that he might deliver us from sin, and raise us to the true and increasing life of the soul. We bless those strains which, in a world of idolatry, spoke of glory to God in the highest, of peace in a world filled with war, and of good-will toward men in a world of selfishness. It was a faith which man could not have invented, but God must have given. But our joy and hope would not be filled out to their due measure, if we believed that mankind have yet received the ultimate good the Gospel is designed to bestow. If the history of the next eighteen hundred years is to be the history of the past eighteen hundred, if hope is to be no more

than memory, and anticipation to be no brighter than experience, one great beauty of our faith would wither, one great pillar fall ; for it is a natural inference, that, if in the beginning Christianity has been able to do so much, if, under a mountain-weight of apathy, and against the pomp and power of empires, it has won such a hold upon humanity, it must accomplish much more when it has obtained possession of the avenue of influence and intercourse over all the nations. Its effects should observe a geometrical ratio, its power should be felt as the swiftly redoubling momentum of gravitation. If it have sent here and there a straggling ray through the solid night of ignorance and superstition, it can finally pour the noontide splendor. If it have cracked already some links, and broken others, of the piled and riveted and many-circling chain wherewith humanity is bound, it can at last shatter the whole into dust. If it have lightened some burdens, and ameliorated some evils, and wiped away many tears, the day is coming when it can do ten or a hundred fold more of the same beneficent work.

But in thus speaking of Christianity being progressive, no one will misunderstand me so far as to imagine that I am saying that there could in the past have been any better religion than that of the New Testament, or that there is needed any new Messiah, any wiser teacher, or any more sufficient Saviour, in time to come ; but only that there may be unlimited progress in men's ideas, sentiments, and

application of religion. No ; Christianity is a spiritual universe. There it stands in its completeness, like the round globe and the blue sky. There it shines like the sun in its perfection, and not an angel from the throne could make its truth more true, its mercy more merciful, its faith deeper, its charity broader, or its hope higher or brighter. Christianity is a fixed quantity, not a fluxion. Jesus Christ is all in all. He drew the cup of human salvation from the stainless fountain of truth. When he said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength," he gave the maximum of piety, or our duty to our Heavenly Father ; and when he said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," he announced the ultimate law of morality, or our duty to our brother man. When he said, "I am the life," he for ever excluded the idea of the highest spiritual life out of the line in which he has gone before us as our Forerunner. When he said, "I am the resurrection," and died and rose again, he gave the crowning demonstration of human immortality. When, with the blood of the cross, he confirmed his new covenant of love, he stamped it with a seal which no self-sacrifice could ever exceed. When he revealed God as a Father, and man as a brother, he exhausted the moral world of its most precious and hidden treasures, and scattered among men — often, alas ! as pearls before swine — the brightest jewels of heaven. Nothing, in fact, can be added to the Gospel to

render it more perfect or powerful, or taken from it to make it more pure. It is the beautiful world of God's truth, and man's duty, and the Creator himself has given it his benediction and authority, and pronounced it very good, and sent it forth to save myriads of immortal beings. It is the bread of heaven, and there can be no nutriment more strengthening; the water of life, and there can be no clearer crystal, no more refreshing draught. But while we say, with this reiteration and emphasis, that the Christianity of Christ is one and the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever, perfect and absolute, it is no less true that the Christianity of the soul, the Church, and society is and should be progressive.

Indeed, it would seem to be hardly necessary either to argue or illustrate the doctrine in contemplation, were it not so flatly denied by some, and so disregarded by many. But looking at the most general point of view in which we can place the subject, it would seem to be a matter to be presumed from the universal law of life, that there would be progress in religion as in all other things. Everywhere there is change, growth, advancement, not a particle of matter, and not a moment of time, but what bears witness to the law. It is seen in the individual, and in the mass. It is the key to history, and the interpreter of prophecy. And can it be everywhere else, and not be in the sum and centre of all truth, and love, and power,—in religion, the revelation of God, the perfection of man, the life

and bliss of the moral creation? It would be an appalling anomaly. It would be a chasm in nature. It would be to reverse, in the highest matters, what holds true of the lowest, from the growth of a flower to the formation of a world.

There are, perhaps, only two serious statements made by any one to refute the doctrine before us. One is the idea of the perfect sanctification of every Christian heart by the special grace of God, by which a state of mind and character is produced admitting of no change or progress. When the Holy Spirit has done its work, it is said there is no more to be done. When Christ is formed within, there cannot be any degrees to the perfect. I am as ready as any one to admit and to teach that God works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure; who would atheistically exclude him from the world of mind, any more than the world of matter which he every moment fills and blesses, darkens and brightens, moves and beautifies? But he works in man, not in interference, but in coöperation with human powers and faculties; and their action may be more or less, better or worse. Christ may be formed within, but his reign may not be entire over the will and the heart. Grace is not a definite quantity, which when present is wholly present, or when absent is wholly absent. There are degrees to all spiritual gifts. The law came by Moses, grace and truth by Jesus Christ. There are degrees in the perfection and fulness of successive revela-

tions to the race, and degrees in the reception of holy influence from the spirit and word of God to the individual soul. To deny progress in religion is to deny that the New Testament is any better than the Old, and to deny that a Fénelon or an Oberlin is a more perfect being than the latest convert from an Indian wigwam. Grace is given as grace is received and improved. They that do the will of God shall know of the doctrine. The sun shines, but the eye that is blind, or that is asleep, cannot see it. The spirit of God moves over the heart, as over all nature, but it cannot be felt by the stone. Grace comes to us, not all at once, but more and more, as we gladly receive and faithfully improve it. The better use we make of our talents, the more are bestowed. The law of the rise and progress of religion in the heart is more, more, and less, less. God will give as much as we can profitably use; but the less are our petitions, the less are his gifts and influences. There is, therefore, not the least opposition to the great truth that Christianity is progressive, arising from the conversion of the soul from sin to holiness, the change of the heart from the love of the world to the love of God. Indeed, that whole blessed process is an exemplification and proof of the doctrine, from the first throb of remorse to the last emotion of reconciled trust. "First the blade, then the ear; after that, the full corn in the ear." There is a new birth, but what were birth without growth? There is a coming out of darkness, a

visitation of the dayspring from on high, but the true light shines more and more unto the perfect day. In fact, all the terms in Scripture by which the religious life is described are terms of growth, movement, progress; as the germination of seeds, the ripening of fruits, the diffusion of leaven, the dawning of the day, the stages of a journey, the increase of the body, the building of a house, and the mysterious courses of the winds.

But a second denial of Christianity as progressive is made on the supposed fact of the perfection of the early Christian Church. That most brilliant fiction, which the imagination has loved to dwell upon, as it does upon all fictions, has been cruelly broken to pieces by the stern logic and inquiry of modern ecclesiastical history. Heretofore, men have seemed content to believe that the first three centuries marked a golden era, since which time Christendom has been cheapening down into silver, iron, and lead. But it is only another instance of the poetical maxim, that "distance lends enchantment to the view." So far from the very earliest days of the Church being immaculate, there were rank errors and foul corruptions rearing their ugly heads almost in the face and presence of the Holy One himself. To say nothing of Peter the denier, and Thomas the unbeliever, and Judas the betrayer, we read enough in the Acts and Epistles of the Apostles to convince us that perfection was not predicable of the primitive Church. Christianity never was pure except in its

great Founder and his immediate disciples. It was corrupted in its cradle. It was whelmed among the false philosophies of the day. We have the foretaste of the most abominable intellectual errors, and the foulest practical corruptions, in the New Testament itself; much more in Eusebius, Sozomen, and Socrates, the three succeeding historians of the Church. We are told by Paul, that there were some that said there was no resurrection of the dead; others, that it was already past. He explicitly states, that the members of the Corinthian church were licentious, and that they made even the Lord's Supper an occasion for drunkenness. We learn from the Epistles of John, that some of the Christian converts denied that Jesus Christ ever came in the flesh; and the sect of the Nicolaitanes is strongly and repeatedly condemned in the Book of Revelation, while all the seven churches of Asia are severely chidden for their deadness and immoralities. This was in the first century; we can easily imagine what was in the second, third, and fourth, at a greater distance from the life and example of Jesus. Such is that pure Church of which we hear so many fictions, and so little fact. Modern historians have not been willing to take things upon trust and tradition, without proof. The truth is, that Christianity, immediately after its promulgation, became mixed by its converts from Jewish and Pagan schools of philosophy, by the pupils of rabbins and sophists, with the dogmas and theories already in their own

mind, and a more heterogeneous compound cannot well be imagined. But the Reformation scattered a host of errors. Later controversies have put an end to others, and, as one after another of the unsightly additions is torn away, we begin to see the fair and divine temple of truth in all its simplicity and beauty. "Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? For thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this."

No arguments, then, can be drawn either from the Christian life of the individual, or the lessons of ecclesiastical history, to refute the doctrine for which we contend. There are three respects in which our holy religion is progressive; not, as already shown, in its record or spirit of divine truth, but in its influence and destiny in the world which it came to save.

1. *The ideas of Christianity are progressive* in the human mind. These are the ideas of God, the thoughts of the omniscient intellect. They are the laws of the moral world, and as such are unchangeable. But as it regards the mind of the recipient on earth, they are capable of greater or less admixture with error. It is the same sun that gives us light in a cloudy day as in a fair one; but in one case he shines with direct effulgence, and in the other quenches and dulls his arrows of light in a floating screen of vapor. The communication of truth depends not only on the purity and power of the giver, but also on the condition of the receiver. It is one

sign of the Divine origin and authority of Christ, that, born and brought up as a Jew, he yet retained none of the local and transient features of his age and country, but rose in all things to the absolute and eternal. He suffered no contractedness from the narrowness of Nazareth, and took no hue from the dark bigotry of Jerusalem. But although his precepts came thus pure and glowing from a world of light and love, they became assimilated to the hearers, as they fell upon gross ears, and entered into benighted understandings. The Jews could not receive the truth, because they were not of the truth. They had more truth than other nations, because they had been educated in the belief and worship of one only true God, but they stained the pure liquid of heaven as they poured it into the discolored alembic of their own minds. To deny, indeed, as some would seem to do, that the ideas of the Gospel received into erring and superstitious minds would lose their large dimensions and perfect whiteness, and would be reduced down to the calibre and color of human spirits, dim and earthly and selfish, is to resist all philosophy and reject all facts. We are not repining. It was a necessary process, as men there were. Children of the dust could not at once, unless miracles had been wrought upon all their minds, grasp in their simplicity and sublimity the truths of eternity. Therefore we say, that as soon as the angel of Christianity had left the cross and the tomb of its Founder, and begun her weary

journey among mortals, her aspect grew less like the heaven she had left, and more like the earth in which she wandered. Her speech of God and the soul became a dialect of Babel, instead of the song of angels. The "Glory to God in the highest" dulled away into the worship of Mammon. The "Peace on earth" was drowned in the battle-cry. And the third wire of this harp, strung by heavenly fingers, "Good-will toward men," soon snapped asunder amid the rough strivings of selfishness.

The great solar idea of Christianity is, that the Almighty God is our Father; but that truth faded away into the heathen conception of a Mighty Thunderer, sitting aloft in the heavens, and hurling abroad his bolts of vengeance over a trembling world. The men of war of that fierce period thought the Creator altogether such an one as themselves. The Jewish doctors on one side, and the Platonic philosophers on the other, largely imported their own doctrines into the Christian creeds. The Gnostic and Manichæan doctrines corrupted the Fathers, and the Fathers corrupted Christianity. Arius introduced some errors, and Athanasius others. Augustine opened the way for Calvin, and Calvin moulded and colored the whole Protestant world with his dark, but potent faith.

Now it is vain to say, that all this while there were the words of Christ to correct the errors of his followers. But they were wrested. They were diluted. They were forgotten. They were put aside,

by no pagan persecutors, but by the very Church herself, as if in shame at her disloyalty. The Bible was denied to the laity, and was little read by the monks and priests. Luther did not see a complete copy of the Scriptures until he was twenty-two years of age. Such closing of the word of God necessarily shut the door to progress. The Church became the prison of Christ. For more than one thousand years, the Gospel was the captive of monks and priests, her truths hidden, her services corrupted, her progress stayed, and her name used for the purposes of ambition and tyranny and pollution. Ages of unreprieved war, ages of priestcraft, ages of persecution for opinion's sake, ages of spiritual darkness over the land, and gross darkness over the people! What a fall was there! The instrument of salvation an engine of cruelty; the good news a terror to men; the name of Christ an incantation to curse, not to bless; the revelation of mercy a machine to crush freedom and progress among men!

But a change came. The Reformation broke the slumber of ages, and called men to life from the tomb in which they had so long lain asleep and dreaming. The old systems of error were partially broken up, and the stream began to run clear.

Then other and even deeper changes have come, and are coming. Error after error is washing away. The pure waters of life are again open to the thirsty, to drink and live. The glorious ideas of Christ, eclipsed for centuries, are coming out in their bright-

ness to men's minds. All branches of the Church Universal have felt the movement, and it is as vain to deny it, as to deny that the sun shines at noon-day. History thus demonstrates that the Gospel is progressive in its ideas of love, truth, and right; and that "when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part will be done away."

2. The second point relates to *the sentiments of Christianity*. All that has before been said about ideas will apply here. Thought is first in the order of philosophy, then feeling. Principles make way for sentiments, and sentiments grow into motives, and motives lead on to action. But how was it possible for the meek and loving graces of Christianity to take possession of the heart of the world, when it was preoccupied with the bigotry of the Jews, and the voluptuousness of Greece, and the ambition of the Romans, and the barbarity of the other nations? Especially, too, when those powerful truths, which were designed to chasten and purify men's sentiments, were lying fast bound in the cells of superstition?

The haggard forms of fear and fancy, which had so long tyrannized over men, the imaginations that had hardened into beliefs, the passions that had taken possession of the arts, the habits which whole histories of blood and wrong and cunning had ingrained upon nations, the monuments and mythologies of the past, the battle-pieces on the canvas and in the marble, the pomp and pride of cities, and the

legends of hill and valley, ancestral and national honors, and all the thick-woven web of either a Jewish or a heathen community, could not at once welcome the love and peace and humility and purity of Christ. "His cross was unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness."

But as time has sped, there have come reformations of Christian sentiments, as well as of ideas. The heart of man has been touched by a kindlier influence. The ages of force are melting into the millennium of love. And though at this moment there may be war carried on by many Christian nations,—awful thought, when we reflect on the purpose of the mission of the Prince of peace!—yet it is not war unrebuked and unquestioned; it is war that is condemned by the disciples of Christ, war that is prayed against, not for; that is petitioned against, that still clings like some vile and guilty thing to our skirts, not that is taken up into the bosom, and carried and cherished there by the warmth of the heart. It is something to protest against evils which we cannot prevent. And this is true of every other social evil and wrong, as well as of war. They exist not in peace, as of old. They are condemned; they are met by the free press and the free pulpit. Aged men lift up their trembling hands, and pray that they may be banished out of the sight of heaven and earth. Little children early learn to lisp their names with horror, and to shrink from their touch as from a serpent. So it is with

intemperance, and slavery, and excess of every kind, and injustice of every degree. Christianity, after being preached and believed for so many centuries, as a religion of fear and of force, is coming to be received more and more as a religion of love. The Jupiter of mere power, the Mars of violence, the Venus of sensual indulgence, and Bacchus the rioter, are moving out of men's hearts, to make room for the incoming of the Father of love, of Christ the pure and gentle, and the Holy Spirit of righteousness and truth. The star of Bethlehem is rising higher in the moral firmament, and governing more and more, by its heavenly attraction and gravitation, the ebb and flow of human society. Here, also, "when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part will be done away."

3. Christianity is, finally, progressive in *its practical influence on life and character*. This follows as an inference from what goes before. If its ideas are slowly received in their whole length and breadth and depth, and its sentiments gradually felt by the heart in all their transforming life, then of course conduct and character come even behind what men think and feel, because their thoughts are often indistinct, and their feelings fluctuating and short-lived. The long divorce between religion and goodness is coming to an end. The Christian world are opening their eyes to see that we must show our faith by our works; that not to him that says, Lord, Lord! but that to him that does the will of our Fa-



ther in heaven, is the heavenly portal opened. The institutions of society are reformed, and based more on the law of right and love. Old abuses are tottering to their fall. The school-house is taking the place of the prison. The hospital is built where once stood the gibbet. Men have got tired of war, and have gone to work. They are learning that the best way to cure evils is to prevent them. The literature of the finest geniuses runs more in a Christian vein, and thus the pen is working with the plough and the spindle and the sail to make a happier earth. The question more and more rises to the heart and to the lips, Why, when men stay in this world so short a time, should they take so much pains to make one another unhappy? They are looking more to see how gently and patiently and sweetly the great Exemplar of goodness lived on the earth, and, amid wrong and outrage the most deadly, was still ever scattering flowers, not thorns, in the path of human existence; was giving here a word of comfort, and there a deed of kindness; making his miracles mercies; always seeking to soften and sweeten sorrow; and giving up life and all things to teach men to deny their passions and love one another.

In the progress of his divine principles over the errors of the past, his Gospel is now aiming to cover and control the whole sphere of society, to be the witness and friend and counsellor of man in whatever station he may be placed. Too long has its

practice been inconsistent, and its profession formal. Too long has it been restricted to Sabbaths, and shut up in churches, and buried in forms and ceremonies. Too long has life and life's law and love been put asunder, though God once joined them together. But it is beginning to be felt that the place of the Christian religion is everywhere, and its time always, and its rule final; that it claims a man's heart and obedience in the counting-room or the corn-field as well as in the church; that it says with celestial mandate, Love, obey, and be happy, on Monday or Saturday, as on Sunday; that it goes with us when we mingle in the social group and raise the joyous laugh, as much as when we follow, slow and sad and tearful, the bier of the dead; that it stirs at the heart when we hear the cry of distress, and extend the hand of help, as when we burn with enthusiasm for the right or with indignation at the wrong; that it smiles in our greetings of happiness, and flashes through our reproof of sin; that it ascends the halls of legislation as well as the closets of devotion; that it guides the casting of a ballot as much as the giving of alms; that it governs the voice of the speaker, and the pen of the writer, and the working of the press, and the spade of the laborer, and the needle of the housewife; that it teaches in our schools, trades in our shops, toils in our fields, muses in our studies, presides in our assemblies, inspires our social scenes, and sits chief in the temples of justice and cabinets of rulers, as much as at the

altars of worship ; that, in short, it reigns over the arts and occupations of men in all their boundless variety ; that its demands are always and everywhere consistent, and that it resolves with a beautiful simplicity all our duties into supreme love to God and impartial love to man. Thus universal, practical, and progressive is Christianity in its application to the conduct and character of mankind. It would make the whole earth one sublime sanctuary of worship, the whole of life a holiday of peace and brightness, and every act and word a progress of the mind in truth, the heart in goodness, and the life in happiness. Say not this is fable. It was fact once. It took form and body in the Son of God. It was perfectly verified in one, imperfectly in many. It may be here and now in these hearts, in these lives ; it may come in ever-increasing beauty, and ever-brightening hope, and holy power. It is the divine life of the soul, for which our heart and flesh cry out unto God. They plead with us not to torment them any more with our excesses and sins, with our worldly sorrows and mean desires, but to bow to the mild yoke of Christ, and find rest unto our souls.

The doctrine of the progressive nature of Christianity, in its ideas, sentiments, and practice, is as yet faintly recognized by multitudes of the disciples of Jesus. They have been all for the past, and not for the future ; all for memory, not for hope ; all for history, not for prophecy. They have distrusted changes. They have mocked at reformations.

They have tried to chain the world where it was, when it would revolve forward in the eternal orbit of moral, as well as planetary, motion. They have been unwilling to confess that they might be in error, and that it was not wise to be too positive, too dogmatical, certainly not denunciatory or persecuting. The mischievous error has always clung to the Church, and does in a great measure to this day, in all its departments, that it must claim infallibility, else it could not gain the respect and obedience of mankind. It has been so in the Greek and Roman Catholic, and it is almost equally so in the Protestant world. The Church has not been willing to have a Master, but has wished to be herself master, and worse than master, — tyrant. The spirit has been, I am certainly right and you are certainly wrong; not, I believe I am right and you are wrong, but I am open to reason. In one word, the effort has been to deny progress, to cry down reforms, to chase away new ideas, to fear the light; not to prove and then hold fast, but to hold fast first and always, and not prove at all; to bow to the ancient Fathers, whose heads were often nests for the grossest superstitions; to follow great men, who always have great failings; to subscribe creeds, which the few have made to control the many; to join a party, instead of following Christ; to be called by some sectarian and unscriptural title, instead of taking the simple name which I hope we shall all at last be willing to take in preference to any other, that of Christians.

But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part will be done away.

Thanks be to God! we live in a land and an age of improvement. Old things are passing away, and all things are becoming new in the light of a happier and holier light of the Gospel of Christ. And though there are spots in our feasts of charity and commemoration, though there are clouds passing over the sun of our peace and hope, all shall yet be well. We may not chide the slow progress of Providence, or the gradual unfolding of Christianity. Such is the law of Him with whom a thousand years are as one day. Let us work in the power and love of the Gospel, and if we cannot right the world, we can at least right ourselves; if we cannot regulate nations, we can govern our own hearts; if we cannot abolish hoary abuses, we can show a luminous spot of goodness in our own circle, and make our households sanctuaries of truth and love, of every grace and every bliss, and thence shed abroad a light on the dark world. For though nations should apostatize, and churches sink into corruption; though the works of the learned should perish, and the Christian universities be closed; though Christianity should leave the city and the market-place, country and fields, and her missionaries should come home from their world-wide philanthropy and renounce the sublime hope of Christianizing the world; though our holy faith should retire from the gaze of men, and we should follow it to its last holy retreat on earth,

— a mother kneeling over her infant child, and offering up to the Father of spirits her thanks and supplications, — yet even there would we catch a new spark of hope and a new inspiration of faith; for we should remember that it was in such a holy scene, that, eighteen hundred years ago, the mother of Bethlehem prayed over the babe in the manger, and blessed her Saviour-child. For thus “hath God once and again chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty.”

DISCOURSE XXIII.



WISDOM, LAW, AND FAITH.

FOR WITH THE HEART MAN BELIEVETH UNTO RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND WITH THE MOUTH CONFESSION IS MADE UNTO SALVATION.—Romans x. 10.

In other terms, a hearty faith is essential to a right character, and the open acknowledgment of one's religion is necessary to complete moral safety.

Life is simply a balance of forces, viewed not as it respects its origin, but its fact; and if this equilibrium of forces be lost, life gives out, as a taper is extinguished by the wind. If we rise higher than the breath of the body, and contemplate this wonder-working spiritual life, the life of the intellect, of the conscience, and of the heart, we discern the same balance of forces. And if this equipoise be lost, the whole character is twisted awry, and its fair proportions destroyed. We have, for a well-formed human being, a distortion; some powers grown monstrous, some powers shrivelled up.

I go upon the presumption now, that every person before me desires to be true, and that is equivalent

to being happy in the long run. You all feel the beauty of a good life; its loveliness wins and charms every beholder; but you all are aware of its difficulty. It is hard to keep this harp of thousand strings always in tune. Only one has done it, and He, the beloved Son, made perfect music with all his combined powers unto the Good Father.

There are three principal forces, or creators of character, which at different periods have been popular among men. They are all good; there is a need of them all to keep the whole man sound; but the error has been, that either one was sufficient of itself.

These three are Wisdom, which answers to the Mind, Law, which refers to the Conscience, and Faith, which appeals to the Heart. The three most eminent civilizations, or refinements of human nature, have been based upon these three principles respectively; the Grecian upon Wisdom, the Hebrew upon Law, and the Christian upon Faith. Let us take a glance at each.

1. "*The Greeks*," said St. Paul, "*seek after Wisdom*." This was a just and comprehensive generalization, and it is borne out by all we know of that famous people. The Romans, though they had civil and military possession of Judæa in the time of our Lord, never manifested any curiosity to know his doctrine. At the trial of Jesus, Pilate, in reply to a remark of his prisoner, asked in a careless way, What is truth? as much as to say, Who cares anything about so fanciful a thing as truth,—a thing we

can neither eat, drink, nor wear? And* then he went out, without stopping to get an answer to his question. A Greek would not have done so, but he would have entered into a philosophical discussion, even if he had been obliged to delay the trial. But the Romans were men of action, not, like the Greeks, men of thought; so we lost that beautiful answer which Jesus would have given to the inquiry, What is truth? The Greeks, in fact, *did* once come specially to learn what they could about Jesus. "And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus." It is a significant, characteristic fact, that the only representatives of the Gentile world that ever came to Jesus were Greeks. Their wise, inquiring spirit prompted them. It was the passion of the nation. We have another revelation of this character when Paul went to Athens. "For," it is said, "all the Athenians, and strangers which were there, spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing." It is a most curious fact, pointing the same way, that the New Testament itself is not written in Hebrew, as we should suppose it would be, because the men were Jews who first preached the Gospel, but in Greek, the language of the wise and the understanding people, the best language then on earth.

. The Greeks, as we know from history and litera-

ture, as well as from the Bible, looked deeper into things than any other pagan nation. Their institutions were the best, their fine arts led the world, their philosophy was the most wise, their systems of education the most comprehensive, and in some respects better than ours are at this day, their literature and science the most perfect of the ancient world, and their morals the most rational and conscientious. Even their fragments are richer than the complete works of other countries. The Greek civilization, the civilization of Wisdom, sits on the black surface of History, like a beautiful white lily on the water, fragrant, and with face upturned to heaven, while around and below are dark depths, and slime, and weltering wastes of weeds and water. Who shall speak of Socrates, the wise moralist, Homer, the greatest of poets, Plato, the profoundest of philosophers, and the best of their wonderful characters in every art and science, without a thrill of admiration? The human intellect culminated in fair Greece. Singly, her geniuses never can be surpassed. By the power of association, men can now achieve greater wonders in society; but whose single mind can match that of Plato, whose sagacity can outreach that of Socrates, whose arm can surpass that of Leonidas, what name so great in eloquence as that of Demosthenes?

But Wisdom is not the whole of life. To know is great, but to do is still greater, and to be right greatest of all. Knowing and doing are modes of

culture for the higher achievement of being. The theory of life and the universe, that we can or ought to know everything, is a false one. The intellect is the chief faculty addressed by the Grecian Wisdom. They had no good culture for conscience or the heart. Idolatry was their religion, slavery and war and licentiousness their morals. They had no sense to respond to the Eternal Law, no feeling to answer to the Eternal Love, only the thought that was cognizant of the Eternal Wisdom. They called the world itself Kosmos, order, or beauty, as its highest description.

2. But another civilization, and Revelation came to raise the human family a step higher. The central idea of *the Hebrew commonwealth was Law*. Truth was no more a thought, as among the Greeks, but a command; and man was not only to know, but to do, the will of God. The world is no longer a place for philosophical speculation or artistic creation alone, but an arena for action. The chief power which is appealed to is conscience. All parts of the Jewish system are legal,—the ceremonial, the moral, and the spiritual. If we divide religion into two parts, one of restraint and the other of excitement, the Hebrew code represents the one of restraint, and the form in which it is put is, *Thou shalt not*: *Thou shalt not steal, kill, covet*. But the Christian code represents the one of excitement to all the noblest faculties of man: *Thou shalt love, Thou shalt believe, Thou shalt hope*. One is a Law, the other

is a Faith; one is addressed chiefly to the conscience of man, while the other lays hold of the heart. The Jewish civilization is a higher one in its great moral power, than the Greek in its intellectual wisdom and beauty. Plato, Aristotle, and Homer are mighty names; but Abraham, David, and Isaiah are spoken of where Greek literature never penetrated, and they are still a living power in the great Christendom. So much stronger and nearer the heart of the Infinite Providence, and more victorious over change and chance, is the knowledge of the right, than even the greatest wisdom of the wise. Not that mankind reverence philosophy and poetry less, but morals and religion more. But even the knowledge of the Right does not cover the whole fact of the universe, any more than the knowledge of the True; there is still wanting the great additional, the knowledge of the Good.

The forms of character created by the Hebrew civilization are as sublime as those of the Greeks are beautiful. If the people of Judæa never carved a statue or wrote an epic, they could yet appeal to the justice of mankind, and say, Witness these living forms of human character and beauty, superior to the Parthenon or the statues of Phidias, to the Iliad or the Odyssey. The pastoral of Ruth is more beautiful than any eclogue of Theocritus or lyric of Pindar. Job is a grander poem than the description of battles and sieges in the classics; Moses is superior to any statesman of Greece; and Mary is a

lovelier conception than any Juno or Venus of the Mythology.

But the union of the two, the sublime and the beautiful, the gentle and the grand, the merciful and the majestic, is only effected under the faith of Jesus. In general, however, his followers have not advanced beyond the Law; they still Judaize. The Catholics go for the pompous ceremonial, kindred to the magnificent temple service of Mount Zion. Rome is the New Jerusalem, the Pope is high-priest, and Catholicism, like Judaism, is a theocracy. The Calvinists go for the payment of the debt of sin by the vicarious atonement of the Lamb of God, and therefore virtually for a system of law. Religion, as taught by most Christian sects, is more a restraint than an excitement. It aims more to suppress the lower propensities, than to inspire the higher sentiments. It constantly harps upon, Thou shalt *not*; not upon the higher tier of commands, Thou shalt. The Law has emptied its seven vials into Calvinism, hard, obligatory, ascetic Calvinism; and Calvinism underlies the whole Protestant world, as the primitive stratum. To be sure, the system is called one of justification by faith, but it is really one of law, rigid, sinewy law. The question is of justification, not of righteousness; one of acquittal or condemnation at the great bar; not of good works, but of one good work, faith; not of culture, character, spirituality, growth in a divine life. God is the Judge, not the Father. Christianity is still held as law,

the law of faith. The system of religion is made a bargain, a commercial transaction; so much salvation for so much faith; so much done by Christ to pay for so much that we have misdono; so much hope and interest in heaven for which he has paid such a ransom. The hardest parts of religion are dwelt upon,—the cross, the agony in the garden; the *woes* are cherished, the warnings are reiterated. The doctrines of a personal Devil and a material hell are prominent. If there is anything specially unpleasant to do, that is seized upon as the first duty. The joy, the peace, the rest, the beauty, the love, the heavenliness of Religion, are not remembered. She is made as a duenna, old, disagreeable, and envious of the happiness of youth, who discountenances recreations, and makes conscience artificial; not as a queen, beautiful, winning, and gracious, gaining all hearts to her allegiance. Its great types of character are John Calvin, burning Servetus; John Knox, denouncing Mary; Oliver Cromwell, whose soldiers were called Ironsides; Luther, whose words were called a battle; and the stern and unbending Puritans of New England. Thus the two steps of a ceremonial and a legal Christianity have been taken.

3. There is therefore still remaining a higher form of the character and life of man than either Grecian Wisdom, or Hebrew Law, or Catholicism, or Calvinism, as thus far developed. It is that of *Christian Faith*. Wisdom is for the intellect, Law

for the conscience, but Faith for the heart. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

The others were more in the character of earthly powers. Knowledge and wisdom range among things seen and temporal. The Law did not call upon the world to come, but limited its sanctions to the present life. This faith opens heaven as well as earth, and establishes a correspondence with God and eternity. This is the lightning-rod on which fires descend from the skies. We are, if we may so say, no more dependent upon earthly streams to water our fields, but we call upon the clouds of heaven, "the wandering cisterns of the air," to shed down their sweet rains, and the universal atmosphere to distil her gentle dews.

Many are inclined to make faith a matter of the intellect chiefly, and to identify it with conviction by means of argument. But if belief upon rational ground be a part of faith, yet there are other elements of confidence, love, and trust, which enter into the composition. Faith of this kind is not a result reached by demonstration alone, as in the case of a mathematical problem, but a state arising from the moral and spiritual character, the tone of feelings, and the complexion of one's motives and purposes, quite as much as from the perspicacity of the intellect. Thus, in the time of Jesus, many did not believe in him because their deeds were evil; and they would not come to the light, lest they should be reproved.

But the proposition of Paul stands good, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." The process is clear;—the great motive-power comes from the heart; faith is the conductor and connector; and character, righteousness, is the end. The absurdity of insisting upon either one exclusively is instantly seen, when we arrange the parts in this order. Suppose we insist upon righteousness, good works, moral character, a good life. We, as Unitarians, are thought to do a great deal of this work. But righteousness, good works, moral character, a good life, are effects, and they will not come, "like spirits from the vasty deep," without a cause. These beautiful and superlative excellences, in favor with God and men and angels, will not be, merely by calling them. We might as well call for flowers over the brown herbage of winter; but no flowers start into life and beauty, until mild gales and cheerful suns have warmed the sod and made it fragrant and beautiful. So it is equally vain to insist on the first term of the proposition, the heart, or the second term, the belief, or faith, without the others. It is a chain of which no link can be spared, — the heart, faith, and righteousness, — the heart as the origin, faith as the means, and righteousness as the end. This is productive of a superior type of character to that formed either by Wisdom or Law.

I hear from every church around us loud calls to Faith. But from one it is faith in the Pope, as

the vicegerent of the Lord ; in the Virgin Mary, as the mother of God ; in the ceremonies of the Church, as instrumental of salvation. And from another, it is faith in a set of doctrines, instead of a set of persons, as in the other case ; faith in the Trinity, in Total Depravity, and the Atonement ; and none is allowed to be recognized as a Christian until he has subscribed such a creed. And from another, it is faith in the Church, in her liturgy and her articles, in the decisions of her councils and bishops. And from others, it is faith in some great leader ; among the Lutherans in Luther, among the Calvinists in Calvin, among the Methodists in Wesley, among the Campbellites in Campbell. Let me not utter words of reproach against any of these faiths. Blessed be God for even the lowest rounds of the ladder on which his children may climb upward into greater light and liberty ! Are not these all groping their way towards the light, if haply they may feel after it and find it ? But what I would say is, Have we not dwelt long enough amongst these beggarly elements ? Let us arise and go unto Jesus. Let us, as Christians, I would say to all these brethren, drop all the intermediate articles of the creed, and go directly to the fountain-head, to the Father.

The saving faith is not a faith of the head, so much as a faith of the heart. It is not in just such doctrines, or just such ceremonies, or just such a theology, that its prevailing efficacy resides, but in its hold upon the spiritual truths of Christianity, in

the nearness with which it brings us to God, and in the tenderness and vividness with which it raises the holy image of Jesus to our inner vision and enshrines it in our deepest love, and in the solemn awe and joy with which it arches over us the mighty heavens of Infinitude and Eternity, of which these visible skies are but a fugitive scarf and scroll. He who has this trust of the heart in God and goodness, in Jesus and eternal life, will not easily be discouraged, will not lightly give up the battle of life. Military figures, and those taken from the Grecian games and gymnastics, are often used by the Apostle Paul, not because he approved of war, or drank aught of its spirit of diabolism, but because he saw that the hopeful, courageous, enterprising, determined, unflinching, and trusting heart with which the combatant cast himself into the Olympic arena, or with which the soldier marched to the battle-field, was needed by the Christian in fighting in a nobler cause, and winning a better victory.

And when I look around me in society, or over the face of the world, or into the folds of my own breast, I see everywhere the need of this faith of the heart, which works righteousness. Grecian Wisdom is not sufficient; a mere literary Christianity may amuse the taste, and gratify the understanding, but it cannot enlist our whole nature, and make all our life sacred and beautiful, as if we were living in the very antechamber and on the threshold of heaven. Hebrew Law is not sufficient, — a merely legal, cal-

culating, condemnatory, and police Christianity cannot avail us. Under the ceremonial law of Rome, the passions of baron and monk and nun boiled like *Ætna*; and under the doctrinal law of Protestantism, the gulf-stream of war, slavery, intemperance, lust, fraud, rushes like a torrent, and carries treaties between nations, compromises among states, resolves of duty, and principles of truth away before it, like feathers upon the cataract of Niagara. What, we ask, shall, what can, stay these awful powers of evil, and catch, and bridle, and harness again the fiery coursers of the sun, who have run away, and set one third of the heavens on fire?

I reply, nothing great, nothing splendid, or imposing, but so simple a thing as Christian faith; the faith of the heart; the faith which worketh by love, and overcometh the world, and believeth unto righteousness. Any faith which stops short of righteousness as its goal, will soon cease to be a faith at all. But the working faith grows by what it feeds on, and acts and reacts like the auricle and the ventricle of the heart.

How imperative is the need of this faith I need not say, for your own hearts can tell it better than my words! You know, deep down in your souls, where no eye but that of Great Heaven can look, how many fears and struggles, how many doubts and questionings, you have; how hardly the heart sometimes keeps whole and keeps strong, though all the while you are moving about among your fellow-men

with a placid demeanor, as if no great controversy was going on within.

In youth, when the reality of life, its hard sense of struggle and discipline, first breaks on the consciousness, and the gay morning clouds of illusion are burnt up by the heat and burden of the day, and the solemn duties and the great trials and the mighty dangers roll in like billows upon the soul, what shall stay the heart but faith, a filial trust in God, confidence in Jesus as able and willing to save all who come unto him, and give rest unto the soul?

And when the sun of life rides high in the heavens, and body and soul are strong, and life and business and pleasure and ambition, and a thousand cares, prey like vultures on the mind, and manhood is like Prometheus on the rock, chained, and devoured, what shall smooth the anxious brow, and steady the tempted virtue, and say to every Satan of the host, Get thee behind me, and invoke every virtue and every grace, and call to every better influence, Come and save me, — do not let a soul drown in worldliness, in sin; still keep me out of the deep waters, and in the open air, and under the heavens, that I may live and breathe and not die! What but a pillar of faith firm as adamant can maintain upright the soul of manhood in a crooked and evil generation?

And when age draws near, and friends are gone, and the clouds of glory again assemble around the departing, as they did around the rising sun, but dark,

portentous night now, and not a brighter noon, as then, gathers in the face of heaven, and frowns over the earth, what but the star of faith can light the midnight sky, and speak of another and brighter world than this, hanging aloft in God's great universe, and showing real and true as the pillared firmament itself?

And when friend after friend departs, and dear and beautiful children are removed by death, when sorrow and sadness and pain are the daily guests in our houses, and gather around the hospitable board and the dear domestic altar, I need not speak of the worth of this faith of the heart, for it is the sufficient comforter and strengthener. This is a consolation that all the floods of grief cannot drown, and that all the furnaces of affliction cannot consume.

And when, finally, we look abroad, and survey the condition of the world, behold Christian Europe, pausing for a moment, before she plunges into an ocean of human blood, and a hell of human pangs and griefs and woes, by a general war; or turn to Asia, and hear the fall of ancient monarchies, resounding through the world, like the crash of gigantic trees in the depths of the forest; or return to America, apparently ready, by the act of her highest council, to strike a two-edged blow of iniquity, and deal the poor Indian a new insult and injury, and rivet a new chain on the poor slave;—when storms and shipwrecks on the ocean, and hurricanes on the land, and unprecedented conflagrations and accidents

in the cities, seem but the outward emblems of the terrible crimes and sins of mankind, and nature groaneth and travaileth in pain for her children;— what shall reassure the soul that the Great Providence is still working for good, that Infinite Justice and Mercy have not deserted the throne of the universe, but the faith of the heart, the filial trust in God as our Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ our Lord?

DISCOURSE XXIV.



I WOULD NOT LIVE ALWAY.

I WOULD NOT LIVE ALWAY. — Job vii. 16.

THE Book of Job is a poem of the dramatic kind. It may have been founded on the history of some individual known to the writer; or it may have been, as many learned divines have supposed, a fable or allegory, in which all the facts are not necessarily true, but were imagined, to adorn and enforce the moral. The leading object of the book is to vindicate the ways of God to man, to show that adversity is not always the criterion of wickedness, and that the discipline of life will finally result in the greatest good of those who are exercised thereby. Some of the noblest strains of poetry, and piety, the purest bursts of eloquence, are found in this book. It has also many of those epigrammatic sentences which condense in a single line extensive and profound truths.

The suffering hero of the work, having been visited by a succession of the most overwhelming trials, by which his children were all killed, his flocks and

herds destroyed, and his servants slain, was reduced to such a state of grief and depression, as finally, though he bore up manfully at first against the tide of woes, to curse the day of his birth, and pray for death as a release from his sorrows. His friends, although they came ostensibly to condole with him, yet rather aggravated than soothed his troubled mind, by their sharp reproofs and unjust surmises. The despairing man, seemingly frowned upon both by God and man, sitting in ashes, clothed in sack-cloth, an object of suspicion, and not of pity, to his friends, describes in the most vivid manner his utter and abject grief. He loathed his life itself, and longed for death. In this state of mind he uttered the words, "I would not live alway": words which, as used by him, might signify his preference of immediate death, but words also capable of a modified and Christian sense, — that this life would be undesirable, if it were perpetual; that it would be better to die than to live here always, — better, for so is a wider, an infinite range given to hope, — better, for the soul finds not room here for her full growth, — better, for friends are fast leaving us for some other state, and we should be left solitary, — better, for the body would prove but a broken and crazy abode for its indwelling inhabitant, — better, for such is the will of Heaven, and that will, we have no doubt, is good and right and kind beyond all our conceptions.

We would not live always; yet it is not because there is not much peace and joy allotted us here.

We have no sympathy with that sour, repining, self-torturing mood, that selects and combines all that is dark and sad and discouraging in the present existence, and calls it a picture of human life. It is an unchristian mood. Nobody ought to indulge it. It is a false view. "True," as has been said, "there are shadows as well as lights, clouds as well as sunshine, thorns as well as roses ; but it is a happy world after all." It is a fair and beautiful world, shaped with divine skill, painted with hues out of heaven, pervaded by all that is most sublime and glorious, — by the spirit of God himself. It is full of beneficence to all creatures that inhabit it. It is a world that has more day than night, more suns than storms, more health than sickness, more prosperity than adversity, more life than death. Is it for man, the sole creature whose mind can trace the benevolent Author of all, to stop his ears that he may not hear the music, and shut his eyes that he may not see the beauty, that reigns over this glorious creation ? He cannot move or think, but what he experiences the arrangements of the Divine love. The minutest parts of his animal frame, the pores of the skin, too small for the naked eye, the tiny valves of invisible blood-vessels, and the thousand-fold adaptations and harmonies that run into every part of his complex constitution, are so many tongues to rebuke the discontented and complaining. Shall man, this miracle of mercy, this wonder of God's care, this concentration of his kind and wise laws and provisions, be impa-

tient of the life so kindly given, and so wonderfully and fearfully sustained? Is there nothing to love, nothing to live for here, that one should sigh to depart hence? Are there no bright and sunny days, no social delights, no glad hopes, no springs of joy on the earth? Has childhood no glee, youth no pleasures, manhood no happiness, age no dignity, that we should be discontented, and chafe and fret against our heritage and lot? There is much to enjoy here, much to do, much to interest us, much to live for, and much to love. It is not because there are not multitudes of blessings strewn along life's path, that we would not live here alway, for "it is a happy world after all."

We would not live here alway; yet not because there are trials and sufferings. True, we meet with much to dishearten and sadden us. The wearing anxieties, the corroding cares, the sense of unsatisfactoriness even when we have attained our object, the griefs and pains that often take us by surprise, and often oppress us for days and years,—if they were all brought together in one view, and it were forgotten how many alleviations and respites there were, how many mercies mingled with sorrows, what strength given for the occasion, what kind remembrance of our frames, and what tempering of the wind to the shorn lamb, the picture would be a black one indeed. But when we further reflect on the end of these chastenings, the wise purposes they serve in our moral education, the blessed results

they accomplish for our minds and hearts, — when we understand that present evil is future good, that sorrow has a mild angelic face, only it is hidden behind a mask, that we shall by and by rejoice that we were tried and purified in the furnace of affliction, — then we can bow contentedly to the appointments of God's love. We can feel that it is good to live, though, in the words of poetry, "storm after storm rises dark o'er the way"; that a truly Christian heart, which sees the hand of Heaven in all, will never lift a violent hand against life, and rush prematurely into another state before the discipline of this has terminated. If good was not educed out of evil, evil would be a problem beyond our power to solve; but now we understand its uses, we can welcome it as the sick do the bitter drug that is to assist Nature against her foes, as the wounded the lancet that shall remove the now useless and dangerous limb. Though troubled, then, by earthly ills, they shall not extinguish our love of life, or make us murmur under its wholesome corrections, its blessed ministries and teachings. We will say, Let the Supreme Will be done; if life is spared, we will rejoice in it; if it is cut off, we will be resigned; if it is happy, we will be grateful; if it is vexed and saddened, we will not suffer ourselves to be disquieted, but commit all to Him who judgeth and ordereth all righteously.

Though we would not live alway, it is not, then, because life's cup has no sweetness to delight us, nor is it because it has in it bitterness and tears.

The hopes, friendships, and privileges of existence are great, substantial, and noble things. They yield pure, elevated, and entrancing enjoyments. We would live for what of good and fair and affectionate and true there is of the present lot. And, on the other hand, we would live also for its purifying afflictions, its humbling reverses, its spiritualizing bereavements, and healthful, though severe, discipline. But though we would live, and live contentedly and joyfully, yet would we not live always here.

For the whole arrangement of things, and the whole constitution of man, show that this world could not be a final home for us,—that we could not endure to be immortal below. Even the most worldly would tire of the world, if they believed that they must abide in it always. And all the occupations of society would grow wearisome indeed, if they were to be continued for ever by the same persons. The husbandman would not be contented to till his fields through eternity. The mechanic would not be satisfied to look forward to nothing but his daily labor. The merchant would grow tired of trading, and the mariner of sailing, and the teacher of teaching, and the physician of healing, and the lawyer of arguing, and the clergyman of preaching, if all did not anticipate a great consummation of the present state; if all did not view their pursuits as limited, and not perpetual,—as introductory to something else; and hope would whisper something better and nobler and more satisfying than aught of earthly labor, care, possession, or pleasure.

The body, too, — exquisite in its construction, but frail, feeble, fatigued, — this could not be immortal here. Immortal, did I say? Let but forty years pass over it, and it has already reached its vigor, and begun to decline; and when eighty have shed their frosts and snows, and suns and rains, upon it, what a bleached, tottering, defenceless, crazy tabernacle it is! The most stalwart form is bowed, the brightest eye is dimmed, the acutest hearing is dulled, and the hand that was once mighty in battle, mighty in labor, is weak as an infant's. So vividly true are the sacred words: "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow: for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." Man's physical constitution enters, then, a protest against his living here alway. The handful of dust that was caught up and fashioned marvellously together, and to which the fluids of the earth and the gases of the air brought their willing contributions, and formed these living temples of flesh, already is hastening impatiently back to the elements from which it sprang. Beauty fades, strength decays, the organs refuse to do their office, and the outside garment, which man wore and walked about in, he throws aside into the grave, and mounts himself above. This is the ordination of Heaven, and wise and beneficent. No form of matter is, or, so far as we see, could be, eternal. If our bodies had been made out of the hardest and most indestructible materials, —

the bones iron, the flesh gold, the nerves asbestos,—they would decay as now, and probably faster. For the very flexibility and softness of the tissues of the present human system adapt it to the sphere it moves in, and its very frailty makes its possessor the more alert against all that would injure or destroy it. Well and wisely has the great Architect framed his work, and if it decays, he designed it should decay, and we should be acting counter to his will if we wished it to endure for ever. We would not live alway, then, for our physical constitution remonstrates against such a wish as an everlasting abode on this spot of earth.

But this is not all. We would not live alway, for friends have left us and gone hence. There is no one but has some such treasure beyond the tomb,—venerable fathers, affectionate mothers, pure sisters, noble-hearted brothers, and the long household train, husbands and wives and children,—beautiful, innocent children,—all gone home, and we left, perhaps, among strangers. From the bright and holy scenes of the upper world, from mansions of rest and glory, from bowers of beauty and bliss, they bend to invite us to ascend and dwell with them. They are magnets in heaven, and though the affections of our hearts, like the needle, disturbed by earthly things, may vibrate this way and that, yet in the end they are constant to the great law of attraction, and faithful to the pole of heaven. They draw us up to themselves. And although life immortal were prom-

ised us here, yet should we be reluctant to accept the gift, and dwell for ever away from those we have known and loved. That the future state is to be a social state, there can be no doubt. Our nature points to it, our present condition indicates it, and if the Scriptures have not asserted, they have implied it. Our social nature, therefore, would not permit us willingly to live here alway; and thus forego, not only the intercourse of departed friends, but of departed worthies of all ages and nations. Noble beings, who have toiled and suffered here, and to whom we owe much of the happiness and the hope of life, patriots and philanthropists, prophets and reformers, apostles and martyrs, and, leading all, the Author and Finisher of our faith, — these throw a glory and bliss into the idea of the future state, and render us impatient of any other destiny than that of ascending to those bright immortal abodes, and that pure and blessed society of the just and good and true of all time. We would not live alway, then; for our social nature, affections stronger than death, pant for development and gratification such as earth cannot afford. As the poet has sung: —

“Who, who would live alway? away from his God,
Away from yon heaven, that blissful abode,
Where the rivers of pleasure flow o’er the bright plains,
And the noontide of glory eternally reigns;
Where the saints of all ages in harmony meet,
Their Saviour and brethren transported to greet;
While the anthems of rapture unceasingly roll,
And the smile of the Lord is the feast of the soul?”

We would not live alway in the present state, for our intellectual nature demands a finer culture, a wider range, and fewer lets and hinderances, than it has here. We boast, perhaps, of knowledge and education, and think ourselves wise, nor frankly acknowledge even to ourselves how very ignorant we are. But, occupied as most are with manual labor, oppressed with cares, and concerned to know what they shall eat, what they shall drink, and wherewithal they shall be clothed, the intellect remains uncultivated and benighted. The taste is not refined, the judgment is not balanced, the reason is not exalted and quickened, the imagination is not enlivened and chastened. The powers of the mind begin to unfold here, and admirable opportunities are afforded to many to develop and discipline them. But, compared with their capability of unlimited expansion and everlasting progress, how little is done! How little we know of ourselves, of nature, providence, man, or God! How difficult it is for us to grasp in our puny faculties the vast truths of Science, Art, and Being! And when the most learned man on earth had given a list of all his attainments, how much would still be left out, of which he would be totally ignorant! And, so far as we can see, it would always be thus, if our life were prolonged to ever so great a period here. So have Newton, Mackintosh, Scott, and others, given their testimony. This state does not admit of the full growth of any power and faculty of the mind. And in his efforts to educate

himself and acquire vast stores of learning, how often does the ambitious student prostrate his health and strength, and sink into the grave prematurely, a victim to his noble, but injudicious efforts! We would not live alway in a world that thus cramps and narrows the scope and growth of the immortal mind. No one who has tasted the pleasures of knowledge, the elevation and dignity of intellectual pursuits, and the means which are thus supplied for the culture of our moral and spiritual nature, but what longs for a less embarrassed state in which to prosecute the work of education and improvement. The slow progress we make, the often baffled, always imperfect efforts after advancement, the mixed condition of truth and error, — all these, and many other drawbacks upon our intellectual progress, would render us dissatisfied under the prospect of living here alway. We see the world lying in ignorance and error. It would be a melancholy thought, that so many never-dying, intellectual natures were to dwell here in this state for ever. We wish for ourselves and our race, in the good time of our Father's will, a removal to a condition better fitted than this to refine, unfold, and exalt our mental powers, in accordance with the manifest design of their Author, and their own ceaseless aspirations.

We would not live alway, for we seek a nearer communion with Jesus and with God, higher excellence and virtue, a greater expansion of the moral and spiritual part of our nature. Much may be

done, indeed, in this state. We would not be guilty of undervaluing all that has been provided for these ends. We would not forget the illustrious forms of virtue that have adorned even this sinful world, — the integrity of a Washington, the benevolence of a Howard, the piety of a Fénelon ; — they show what has been, they show what may be done. But before all souls there is an ideal of goodness which they never realize here, an ideal that constantly rises as they rise, and glows more purely and brightly as they attain new heights in the spiritual ascension. Every one sees an enlarged image of himself forward of him and above him, softened and etherealized, as the traveller among the Alps sometimes beholds painted on the clouds at a distance, in wondrous colors, his own walking figure, in large, glowing outlines. This world cannot make good for us this ideal of moral and spiritual character. We may do much; we may escape the thrall of many grovelling tastes and tyrannous habits; we may be constantly improving, till the last grain of sand has run from our hour-glass; every step we take may be a step forward and upward, a new advance into the glorious empire of truth and holiness and love. But we would not live alway here, for we seek after a sphere more congenial to these upward tendencies of our immortal nature, — a sphere free from the gross allurements of sense, and the cravings of passion, — a sphere defiled by no evil examples, or the taint of sin, but pure, holy, bracing

to the spiritual man, invigorating to the loftiest desires of our souls. Sick of a world where so many immoral influences are around the soul, besieging and carrying captive its virtue, we turn to that fairer creation, — that new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, prepared for those who are ready to enter it; we burn for the society of just and good men, for the company of Jesus, and the nearer and more manifest presence of God. For there the holy relations of our being to its Author, to its Saviour, and to our fellow-creatures, will stand out in their sublimity; the morning mists of our existence, the vapors of earth, will have risen and melted away before the glorious light of eternity. Our higher nature, with all its powers and aspirations, will be called into a new and happy exercise, of which the most blessed moments on earth have given us hardly an idea. In view of such a prospect, — and it is one the heart loves, and hope reaches after, and Scripture paints, — who would be contented to live alway? who of us is so little enamored of things of a divine and blissful nature, who has so few risings of his spiritual nature towards its home of safety and rest, progress and happiness, that he is not sometimes thrilled through and through, and transported almost beyond himself, at the contemplation of the serene, starry heavens, or at a sublime strain of music, or in the restless and far-voyaging reveries of the mind, as associated with the thought of the everlasting nature of the soul,

and the glorious rewards of bliss that await its purity and virtue, beyond all that has been experienced of beauty, or ecstasy, or sublimity, in the present state?

Who, then, in view of the frailty of these houses of clay, of the social yearnings of the heart after the loved and gone, of the intellectual energies here imprisoned in the flesh, and in view, moreover, of the moral nature, the spiritual affections, the desires after the good and true and pure and beautiful, that are but imperfectly developed and poorly satisfied here, — who, in view of the peace and society and progress of the heavenly world, would live alway? None, — not one. There cannot be one so false to what is best and holiest in him, as not sometimes to have these thoughts flit across the mind, and these desires steal through his heart. The worst men, — the scoffing infidel, the sensualist, the criminal, — as the workings of their minds have been laid bare by some fearful convulsion, — perhaps by the terrors of death, — have shown that they too had thought of these things; that into the web of their dark spirits were woven the pure golden threads of religion, but marred and broken and overshadowed by the warp and woof of sin.

We would not live alway, — none would; — the worst prefer to die. Even the murderer, haunted by bloody associations and dogged by terrible fears, surrenders himself to justice and to death, the suicide. But if we would not live alway, then we

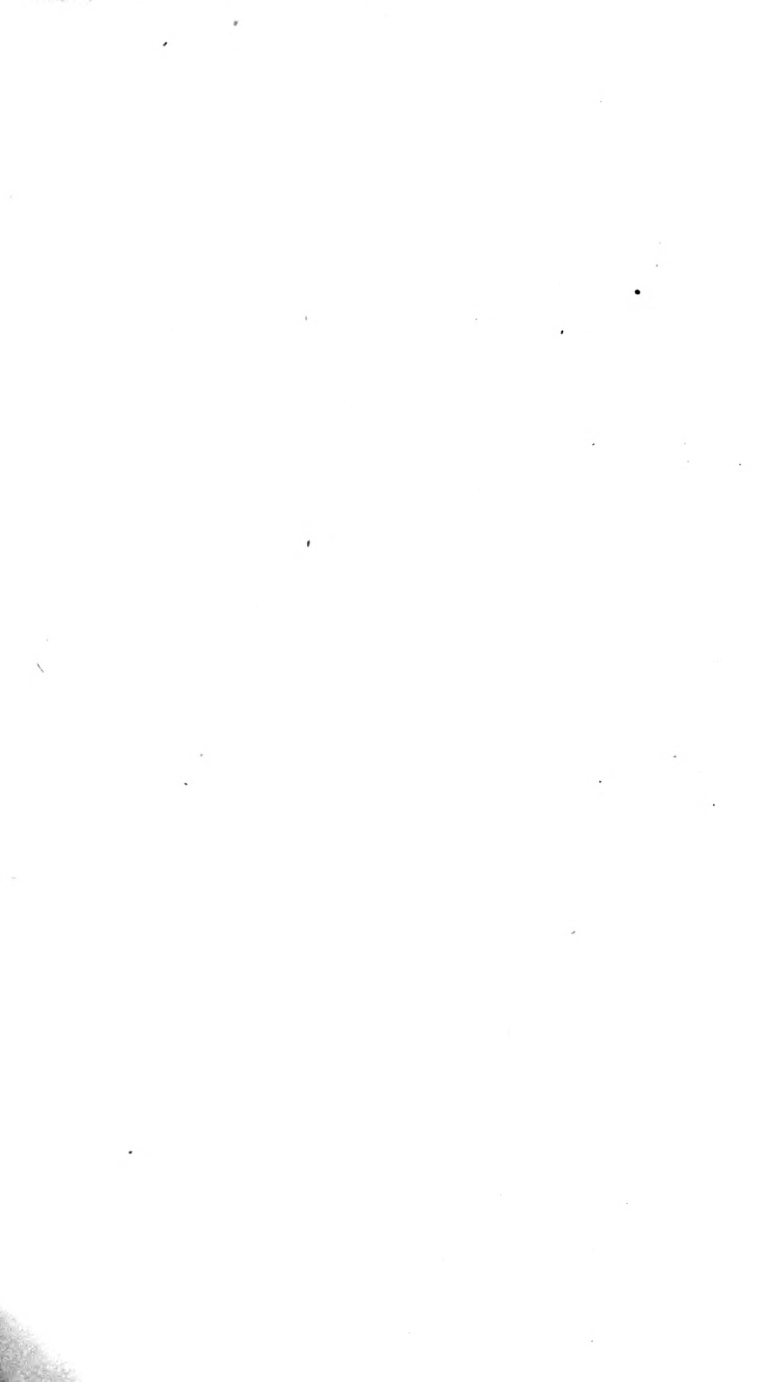
must die; — and to die is fearful even to the best prepared. The apprehension, the uncertainty, the agony, the unknown abyss, the leap in the dark, the coffin, the grave, — they are all dreadful to nature. We start back from them. But let not these things disturb us; there is a faith that plucks out the sting of death, a resurrection that brings life and immortality to light.

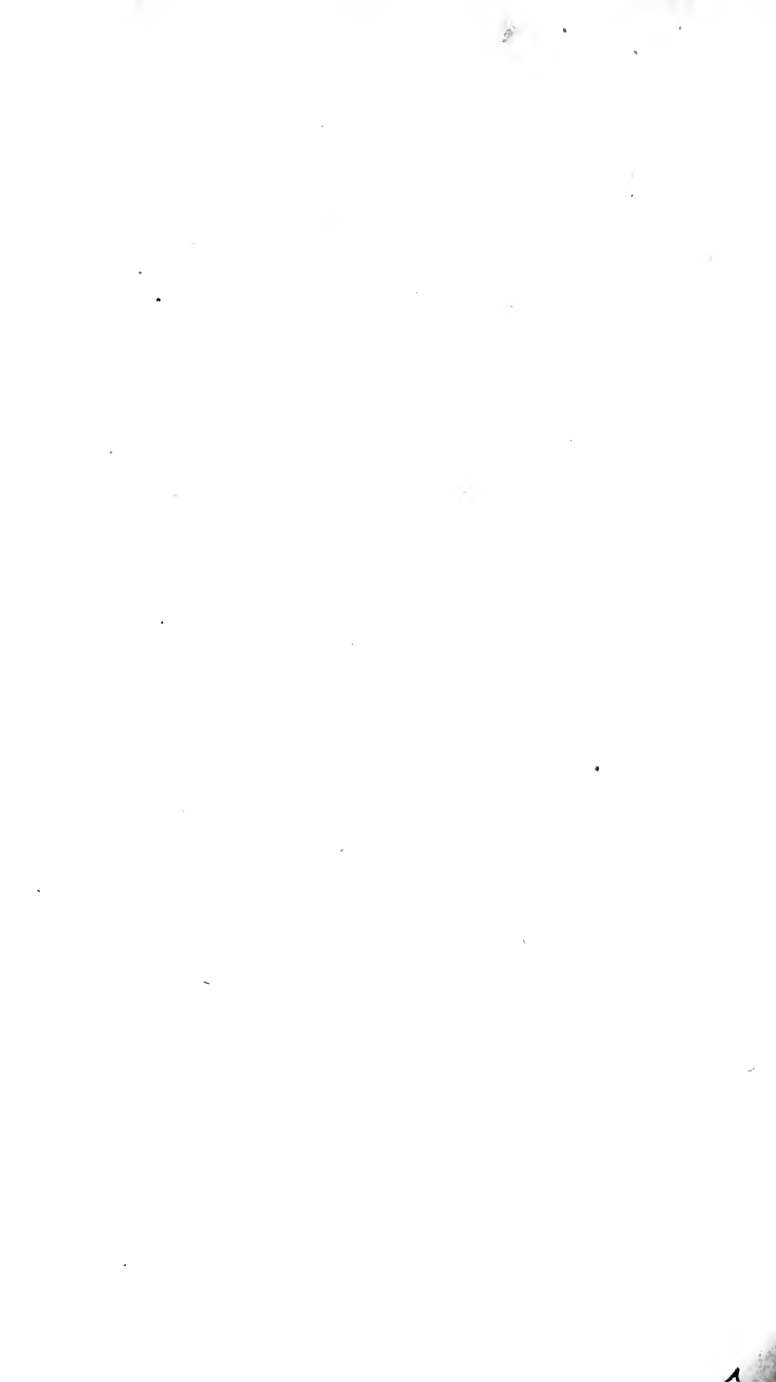
“Would we shrink from the path which the prophets of God,
Apostles, and martyrs so joyfully trod?
While brethren and friends are all hastening home,
Like a spirit unblest o’er the earth would we roam?”

“It is better, far better, with gladness to go
Where pain, sin, and sorrow can never intrude;
And yet we would cheerfully tarry below,
And, expecting the BETTER, rejoice in the GOOD.”

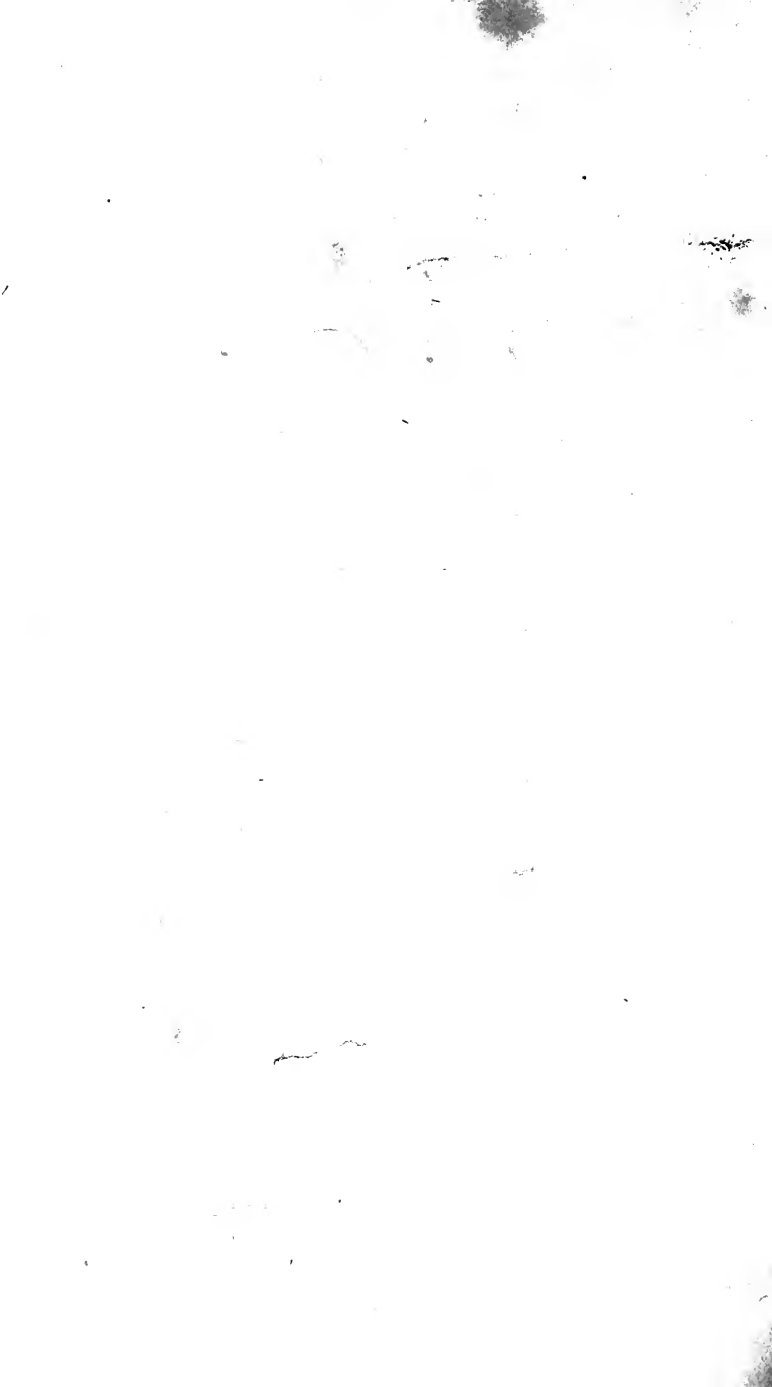
THE END.













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